

Common Ground

Is There an American Stock?

Max Lerner

LETTERS TO ITALY—A RECONSIDERATION

Richard Robbins

THE WETBACK INVASION Art Leibson

PART-TIME AMERICANS Mikhail Jeleznov

VIVA ROYBAL—VIVA AMERICA Beatrice W. Griffith

THE PECAN TREE R. R. Aaronson

SO YOU LIVE GOOD Karl Detzer

EVEN MONEY ON JOHN CHAVIS Arna Bontemps

THE AMERICAN STANDARD—FOR ALL AMERICANS

Pauline R. Kibbe

— *and others* —

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WITH THIS ISSUE COMMON GROUND begins its tenth year. It will be a difficult year, for the series of grants from the Carnegie Corporation, which enabled the Common Council to start COMMON GROUND and which helped to sustain it, have come to an end. Whether that gap can be filled by increased subscriptions and by gifts from old and new friends is the question on which the future of COMMON GROUND depends.

In our first issue nine years ago, the opening editorial said: "The aim of COMMON GROUND is to tell the story of the coming and meeting on this continent of peoples belonging to about 60 different national, racial, and religious backgrounds. It is an endless story and a vast and complex situation, at once promising and dangerous from the point of view of America's current position and her future. Never has it been more important that we become intelligently aware of the ground Americans of various strains have in common; that we sink our tap roots deep into its rich and varied cultural past and attain rational stability in place of emotional hysteria; that we reawaken the old American Dream, the dream which, in its powerful emphasis on the fundamental worth and dignity of every human being, can be a bond of unity no totalitarian attack can break."

Those words are as true today as when they were written in the early days of World War II. How far COMMON GROUND is fulfilling this challenging assignment is not for its editors to say. No one else, certainly, is more aware of its shortcomings, even though enthusiastic readers call it "invaluable," "stimulating," "fearless," "notable for the objective approach and dramatic vividness it gives to the overall picture of America

(continued on page 91)



IS THERE AN AMERICAN STOCK?

MAX LERNER

IS THERE an American stock? The answer must be that there are many stocks in America—more than have ever been gathered together before in a single civilization; that none of them, whatever its claims and arrogance, is more American than the others, and none, whatever its sense of inferiority, less American; that each is different from what it was in its area of ethnic provenance—each touched and changed by the alchemy of the American environment, by the fact of living and mingling with all the others on the American continent; that America is the densest ethnic jungle in the world and has become a great biological and psychological laboratory, whose experiments may issue in undreamt results; that in all the ethnic stocks there has been, whether obviously or subtly, a breeding away from type; that there has also been, subtly rather than obviously, slowly, ever so slowly and yet unmistakably, a breeding *toward* a not impossible American stock, however long it may be in the shaping.

I have set down these answers more summarily than the state of the biological and social sciences today would warrant. Yet except for my last statement—that a new American ethnic type is emerging—which is arguable, everything else is supported by the clear facts of the American experience.

The best vantage points for observing the variety of American ethnic strains are on a subway in New York and at an Army draft induction center. Each is a broad channel through which the human material of America streams. Every people in Europe, most of the varied stocks of Russia, and some even of Asiatic Russia; peoples from every part of China, from Indonesia, the Philippines, Hawaii, Australia, from Outer and Inner Mongolia, from Turkestan, from the farthest reaches of India, from every part of the Middle East, from North Africa and South Africa, from Ethiopia and Liberia and Nigeria, from the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast, from Kaffirland and the Witwatersrand, from every country in South and Central America, from every Caribbean island, from Labrador and Nova Scotia and French Canada, from the Yukon, from Hudson Bay and Greenland and Iceland—there is scarcely a stock on the ethnic map of the world that is not represented in America.

Every traveler in the tropics comes away with an unforgettable sense of the pervasive jungle surrounding and enclosing him, even where it has been cleared and cities built up. America's luxuriant jungle is its ethnic environment of a myriad of peoples. In such a jungle of tropical luxuriance, every type is present,

everything grows fast and intertwines with everything else, anything is possible. I use "ethnic" here rather than "racial" because I mean something which may be a compound of race, nationality, language, religion, region or sub-region—any recognizable stock which by its length of living on the same soil, under the same sky, and in the same community has formed a relatively stable type.

Is any one of these ethnic stocks more "American" than the others? To say of someone, "He is of American stock," means probably: he is white, Protestant, of Anglo-Saxon descent, and his forbears came to America some generations back. This effort to conscript the emotionally laden term "American" for a group representing only a minority of the peoples of America, and by invidious distinction to exclude from the term all the other ethnic groups that make up America, is a familiar device in the technique of prescriptive prestige. Such an exclusion might conceivably have meaning elsewhere, in the case of a more inbred and homogeneous people. In America it is meaningless.

If "American stock" were to mean anything more than the simple fact of American-born, which applies to every new generation of all the diverse stocks, then it can apply only to the American Indians. There is a special irony in this. For after the most ruthless treatment of the Indian tribes, their straggling remnants have been placed in "reservations," most of them impoverished, their culture all but wiped out, the victims of one of the most callous cold wars in history. The "civilized" white settlers, when they came, took the land from them without compunction. For all their fierceness when aroused, the Indians were like spindrift before the great tides of immigration and the powerful movement westward—helpless against such weapons of civilization as gunfire and alcohol,

force and fraud, tuberculosis and syphilis. "American stock," as now generally used, must therefore include the meaning of membership in the stocks which were most immediately in on the kill, the leaders of the great predation, the first in the line of the conquerors. One of the consolations the later stocks can have is that here, at least, is a guilt in which they need not share.

In most civilizations the conquering stock has tried to set itself off on the one hand from the natives it has conquered, on the other from newcomers who may want to get in on the power and the glory. In America this has been difficult on several scores: the natives were too few, and were too easily stripped of their lands and homes to give the feat any sort of glory whatever; there was no one stock that pre-empted the glory of settling America—even at the very beginning of the Republic there was already a variety of stocks competing for a shaping influence in the social amalgam of "the new man, the American"; the real conquest of America was not a military conquest, to be held dear in the prideful memory of those who might boast that the strength of killers flowed in their blood—it was a conquest of forest and plain and valley and river, of new technologies and new social forms, of the social as well as the physical environment, and in that conquest every successive wave of immigrants took part; finally, the leveling facts of the machine and the democratic idea have made America a terribly difficult place in which to maintain pride of stock, and the resulting cross-breeding and mingling of stocks have made the task of the racist purist a bewildering one.

Yet in the world's greatest ethnic democracy there is still a hierarchy of prestige depending partly on stock—black, yellow, brown, and red at the

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bottom, white-Protestant, west-European on top, with the lines between the rest drawn partly in terms of closeness to colonial descent, partly of geographic closeness to the British center of origin of the early settlements. A chronological chart of the sequence of waves of immigration—English, French, Scotch-Irish, German, Scandinavian, Irish, Mediterranean, Jewish Balkan, Slavic, Mexican and Latin-American, Filipino, Middle-Eastern, Oriental—would correspond roughly to the descending scale of prestige in the ethnic hierarchy. The big divergences here are that the Indians, who came first, are not at the top but toward the bottom of the pyramid; and the Negroes, who were brought over early, are not near the top but at the very bottom. The first, of course, were conquered; but since they did not lend themselves to being slaves, and could not be trusted to be docile, and there were not enough of them anyway, other stocks had to be caught, bought, manacled, transported, sold on the auction block, tied to the land, kept in ignorance and bondage; and even after they were freed, those in whom their blood still runs and their color still shows have carried the social stigma of the earlier slave-status.

On the prestige chart of the ethnic hierarchy, one could superimpose still another—an occupational chart of the functions to which the ethnic groups have been more or less specialized. This is fluid, but the correspondences are there: in the South the Negroes do, and have always done, the heavy labor in the fields, and everywhere the dirty jobs in the factories and on the roads and wharves, in digging ditches and laying tracks and building tunnels, while their women are domestics; the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos are domestics also, and do menial jobs in laundries and restaurants; the Mexicans (or "Spanish-speaking

Americans") work at sweated labor in the factories of the Southwest and as migratory workers on the farms of the Southwest and California; the Poles, Czechs, Magyars, and Slovaks are in the coal mines of Pennsylvania and West Virginia and Illinois, in the steel mills and at the open-hearth furnaces of Gary and Pittsburgh and Buffalo; the Irish of the later immigration are cops and saloonkeepers and bartenders in New York and Boston, but also day laborers and building-trades workers, transport workers, longshoremen; the Italians and the Jews work in the garment trades of New York and the other eastern centers; the Italians are also barbers and shoe-shine boys and musicians, and they work on the truck gardens in New Jersey and the vineyards of California, while the Jews move from the sweatshops into the small trades and the middlemen functions, and into medicine, law, dentistry, teaching, and the entertainment world; the Scandinavians are farmers in the Midwest, and loggers in the lumber camps. But in the fluid life of America, the specialization does not stick. In most cases it is the new arrivals who do the work of hewers of wood and drawers of water, while the earlier ones settle down, buy farms and houses, attain skills, and move up to become members of the middle class. The epithets stick—"wop," "dago," "sheeny," "kike," "nigger," "Norske," "Swede," "mick," "Polack," "hunkie," "bohunk," "Chink," "Jap," "greaser"—betraying a class and xenophobe animus as well as a racist one.

Yet the fact is that in the end it was these men who, in a very actual sense, opened and built America. Archibald MacLeish has paid tribute to them in *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City*:

".... This is heavy earth on our shoulders;
There were none of us born to be buried
in this earth:

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Niggers we were Portuguese Magyars
Polacks. . . .

It was we laid the steel on this land
from ocean to ocean:

It was we (if you know) put the U.P.
through the passes. . . .

It was we did it: hunkies of our kind:
It was we dug the caved-in holes for the
cold water:

It was we built the gully spurs and the
freight sidings:

Do not pity us much for the strange
grass over us:

We laid the steel to the stone stock of
these mountains:

The place of our graves is marked by
the telegraph poles! . . ."

Sometimes, reacting overhard against the familiar prejudices and the whole idea of inherent differences of merit between the stocks that make up America, one is tempted to ask: "Is there such a thing as one stock as distinguished from another? Are there not all simply *individuals*—persons, in a rich and bewildering variety?" It is true that the differences between the ethnic stocks are not clear-cut, and it is true that one could find within one of them—say the Jews—wider differences of physiognomy, height, bone structure, skull structure, temperament, than (let us say) between particular Jews on the one hand and particular Italians or Irish or Portuguese or Syrians on the other. It is also stupid to think of the ethnic differences as differences of superiority or inferiority. There are no supermen in America, however much some Americans may wish to develop a cult of the blond Anglo-Saxon gods; there are no submen in America, however much some Americans may wish to assign Negroes or others to that category. There

are no Americans who belong to radically different branches of the human family, in the sense that their blood is of a different genus, or that some are closer to apes and others closer to gods, some born to work and others to lord it over them. There is not even an ethnically pure group in America, for by this time in the history of mankind it has become inevitable that in the blood stream of any group there flows some blood from most of the others.

Yet it would be foolish to deny the reality of ethnic stocks in America, and the differences between them. Those who came to America came from relatively stable ethnic groups. They brought with them strains of heredity and habits of life that set them off from the others, and the social hostility they found caused them to huddle together for human warmth in more or less isolated ethnic communities: they were ghettoized by the others, and they helped create ghettos in their own minds and ways of life. They thus retained, and even froze, their sense of separateness. As soon as we recognize that there is no stigma attaching to membership in any one of the ethnic stocks of America—that in no case does one become prescriptively an American by that fact and in no case is one excluded from being an American—the whole question of ethnic stock can be taken with realism and without passion.

The fact is that America is more than an agglomerate of individuals, jumbled together in a hopeless confusion. America is a myriad of peoples, each of them with an identity of its own carried over from the earliest migration to the latest, and to some extent maintained. What gives America its biological richness is that it is a mingling of ethnic strains. What gives America its cultural richness is that it is a mingling of traditions and temperaments. Unless they had had some identity

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of their own, it would be meaningless to talk of their mingling. Unless those identities were changed and dissolved in the process, shaped and re-shaped, caught up in the ever-flowing stream of the life of all of them together, it would be meaningless to talk of America.

Does the unlimited cross-breeding of ethnic stocks hurt or help the quality of American life? There is a double and contradictory line of reasoning—if it may be called that—which characterizes the “pure America” argument on this score. One is that the more recent immigrants are clannish and refuse to intermarry and should therefore be kept out. The other is that they will flood into the country and overwhelm the “native” stock by the sheer weight of their numbers and birth rate. One argument rests on the theory that they do not mix, the other on the theory that they mix all too much. However contradictory the reasoning of those who oppose an inclusive ethnic concept of America, I suspect that with them logic is less important than emotion—the emotions of invidiousness, guilt, pride, and fear that dominate their thinking.

On biological grounds alone, if these emotions can be ruled out, the central argument for an exclusive concept of American stock is the argument that unlimited cross-breeding will mean the mongrelization of America. Even so reputable a writer as Andre Siegfried, in his *America Comes of Age*, seems to have been made panicky by the thought of a biological and cultural corruption of the pure Anglo-Saxonism of the American tradition by the Negroes, Asiatics, Slavs, Jews, and Mediterranean peoples. The whole concept of mongrelization, if it is to have any meaning, assumes the validity of the concept of a “pure” stock which becomes thinned out and corrupted by unlimited cross-breeding. Obviously there

has never been such a “pure” stock in the history of the United States. The fear of mongrelization is the fear of strange blood and strange ways on the part of groups which, because of their economic or social position, believe their supremacy threatened by outsiders and fix upon racial invaders as the enemy. This fear reaches nightmare proportions in the southern states, where in the name of “white supremacy” the governing group lives under the dubious protection of a series of state miscegenation laws. Georgia, in a triumph of paranoia, has a law which makes any marriage felonious and void if it involves a white person and one with any “ascertainable trace” of African, West Indian, Asiatic Indian, or Mongolian blood. One of the weirder aspects of the miscegenation laws, if they are regarded in terms of any rational threat of mongrelization, is that they are found in the North as well as the South, and that in eight of the states covered by them the Negroes, against whom they are directed, form less than one per cent of the population.

If there are to be any ethnic fears of being submerged and wiped out in the biological amalgam, they belong more relevantly to the colored people. Earnest A. Hooton has pointed out as an anthropological fact that the crossing of color lines in mating has meant a steady diminution of color gradations with each generation, with a steadily larger number of “colored” people whose “color” is so imperceptible that they have “passed” as whites. In a century, says Hooton, the “Negro problem” will be “solved”—not by argument, and not by tolerance, and not by social measures of amelioration, but by the simple biological fact that the Negroes will be submerged in the larger ethnic stream of America. There are, of course, contrary views of the biological future of America. Wyndham Lewis

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quotes the prediction of one biologist who, arguing from the high birth rate of the Negroes and the French Canadians, sees a future in which the whole North American continent will be peopled by French Catholic Negroes. But on the score of the Negroes, the Hooton prediction seems closer to experience; and on the cultural score, the dominant cultural pattern of America is not likely to be replaced by any other for some time to come.

This is not to say, of course, that the biologically dominant stocks of America today will remain unaffected by the process of cross-breeding. Obviously they will not. But there is no question of mongrelization because there is no norm of purity. Each ethnic strain, in the process of interbreeding, "corrupts" the other; each purifies the other; each dilutes and each enriches the other. It cannot be maintained in the face of history that the quality of America has been made by the west-European whites alone, or by any other ethnic strain alone. It is an outcome of the mingling of stocks and traditions on a scale and to a degree unparalleled in history. Instead of arguing (as some historians do) that the great dilution of the native stock coincides with the time of cultural decadence, one could note that in the case of the Italian city-states, Spain, Holland, Britain, and now Russia and India as well as America, the most creative phase comes at the height of the mingling of many stocks. The greater danger lies in closing the gates. If the current American policy of immigration exclusion, in force since 1924 and qualified since only by the urgency of admitting a few of the residues of Hitler's victims, should continue very long, America too would become a closed culture ethnically, and the streams which have fed its vitality would be dammed.

It would be a mistake, however, to

think of the problem of ethnic mixture in America as one of whether each stock entering into the mixture retains its identity or is submerged. Each is transmuted. No stock, once it has come to America, has remained the same. Each breeds away from type, both by the influence of the new physical environment and by the fact of intermingling. Every stock, by the fact of migration, has broken with its past environment and entered a new one. Continued migration from one American region to another, and mobility from one class and therefore one set of living standards to another, continues the process of environmental reconditioning. How drastic the effects may be was shown in the classic study by Franz Boas, *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants*, first published in 1912. Boas showed, in the teeth of the prevailing view (that skull measurements are a fixed and unchanging racial characteristic) that the skull-indices of the children of Jewish and Italian immigrants were different from those of the parents. This is environmental change away from ethnic type. Boas was dealing with the physical factor that one would expect to be most resistant to change, and what applied to skull changes would apply more easily to psychic and cultural changes. What applied under the influence of environmental and standard-of-living change would apply more easily as the result of biological mixture. (I find a surprisingly maladroit misreading of Boas' meaning in Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History*, Vol. 1, 220-1, note 1, where Toynbee argues that Boas is, like his opponents, an adherent of race-thinking(!). Boas writes that his study is suggestive "because it shows that not even those characteristics of a race which have proved to be most permanent in their old home remain the same under the new surroundings; and we are compelled to con-

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clude that when these features of the body change, the whole bodily and mental make-up of the immigrants may change." Toynbee gathers from this "what is the fundamental postulate of all race-theories: that is, the postulate that physical and psychical characteristics are correlated." But this is to miss the meaning of the phrase "may change," which carries with it all of Boas' emphasis on the plasticity of both the cultural-psychic and the physical traits under environmental pressure. The whole point of the racist thinking is that there is no such plasticity, but that a rigid set of inherent physical traits of a superior or inferior caste carries with it a rigid set of psychic traits of a similarly superior or inferior caste. Boas proved the plasticity and rejected the moral hierarchy. The racists assert the moral hierarchy and reject the plasticity.)

The process has been well described by Paul Engle in *American Song*:

*"The ancient features of the type were
changed*

*Under a different sun, in a clearer air
That entered the lungs like wine, the
swarthy face*

*Paled, cheek bones lifted and narrowed,
hair*

*Straightened and faded, and the body
moved*

*With a lighter step, the toes springy, the
eyes*

Eager as a bird's, and every man

*Had a coiled spring in his nerves that
drove him*

In a restless fury of life.

The bloods mingled

Madly. . . .

(Who knows

*What strange multi-fathered child will
come*

*Out of the nervous travail of these bloods
To fashion in a new world continent
A newer breed of men?)"*

The question thus put is the question of how far the plasticity of the American stock, under conditions that make for rapid change, can lead. I put the question in terms of stock, rather than in terms of the cultural uniformity or separateness of various groups—a matter of living-norms and attitudes which involves the cultural "melting-pot theory" and must be treated separately. Clearly every ethnic stock in America, unless it is caught and wholly isolated in some eddy of the American stream, is breeding away from type. But is it breeding toward a new form of its own type, where it will be stabilized and more or less frozen, retaining the boundaries that separate it from others? Or is the process of change a continuing and cumulative one, until the boundaries between groups break down altogether, leaving only variations between individuals? This would mean the emergence of a single and inclusive new ethnic type, a sort of ocean into which all the streams flow.

I incline toward this view. To be sure, it does not mean that America will become ethnically uniform and wholly flattened out. The processes of heredity, and their interplay with the physical and cultural environment, are too complex to allow for either uniformities or flatness. But more and more a central cast of temperament, physique, and lineament will emerge, from which faces and bodily structures with dominant Germanic or Mediterranean or Indian or Negroid or English or Jewish or Slav or Mongoloid traits will be variants. The new inclusive type will carry with it the multiform freightage of all past generations. But there will also be something that crops up more and more frequently until finally it is recognizably present in all.

When this happens, it will mean that an entity has emerged that can be called an "American" stock. In that event it

will be, like the cultural entity itself, the creature of America, not America its creature. Yet as we watch the yeast working in the continually recreated human material of America, who can doubt that the determiners of a not unimaginable American future are at work here? "There is but one victory," wrote Saint-Exupery, "that I know is sure, and that is the victory of the seed." In the light of everything we know about American stock, we must take this to mean the victory not of the seed's rigidity but of its plasticity.

Columnist for the New York Post, Max Lerner spent the summer in Europe covering various countries. This Fall he will be Professor of American Civilization at Brandeis University, continuing his writing for the Post and teaching also at the New School. His latest book, *Actions and Passions*, was published earlier this year by Simon and Schuster. He is presently busy on a long book on America as a Civilization, of which this article will be a section.

THE INDIVISIBLE

OLIVER HALE

*As if in me I feel my brother's heart
sustaining life; his spirit leavens me,
and all his aspects are of mine a part,
whose source reveals a mutual destiny.*

*My brother is not white, my brother is
not black; not all his features can define
a lineage that is distinctly his,
opposed to that which seems expressly mine.*

*Let eagles claw or wolves tear at us both,
and royal blood will stain on either skin,
and flesh disclose the same imperial growth
of dazzling structures equally within.*

*We are love's multi-numbered twins, in Time
and Nature one; out of the dark we came
and shall return, life's fleeting paradigm,
and leave behind the memoir of a name:*

Oliver Hale's work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and other periodicals.

THE WETBACK INVASION

ART LEIBSON

BORN of a wartime shortage of farm workers, and fed on postwar boom wages in the United States and the shrinking 1948-49 peso, the migration of Mexican workers has become an economic monster along the Texas border near El Paso.

In 1948 the wetbacks, so-called because most of them waded the shallow Rio Grande under cover of darkness in search of the good Yanqui dollars, swarmed into El Paso and its adjacent irrigated valleys as never before. Estimates have placed the total crossing, within a single thirty-day period, at between 20,000 and 40,000. Some were to find employment in the fields on the Juárez side of the river, but the bulk dispersed to cross over into the promised land of \$2 a hundred pounds for picking the cotton. Other cotton-growing sections of the South and Southwest paid more—up to \$5 in Arizona—but between the wetback and the lush fields was an effective Immigration Service roadblock and a wide stretch of desert. The workers glutted the market, quickly knocking the picking rate down to \$1.50 and less as the invading horde harvested the crop in record time, bringing the Rio Grande farmers a near-record price, far above the floor guaranteed by the government.

The Mexican bracero (national) could only compare his wage with the domestic standard, and his earnings looked like a fortune—before the commissary deductions were made. Below the border the picking rate was about sixty cents for one hundred kilos, roughly 230 pounds, and competition was fierce for those jobs.

Despite the lowest wage in the industry, and the gouging at the commissary, thousands of wetbacks managed to return home in the fall of 1948 with savings enough to carry them through the winter and spring. And early in 1949 they began again their mass movement to chop the cotton, weeding and hoeing at thirty cents an hour—or less.

They are the forerunners of the cotton pickers expected to bring the biggest official headache ever dumped into the governmental lap of the El Paso office of the Immigration Service.

Organized labor, never strong along the border where it must compete with the Mexicans both for skilled and unskilled job opportunities, has protested long and bitterly over what it calls a tacit agreement between Immigration Service officials and large cotton planters to ignore the wetback during the picking season. They lay the blame in Washington, crediting the local border police for a fine job with a skeletonized personnel.

Equally bitter has been the argument of the planters that they are totally dependent upon the Mexicans to get their crops picked and would face certain ruin if the supply were to be cut off suddenly.

The wetback problem is an old one at El Paso—older than the irrigation project at Elephant Butte, New Mexico, that made cotton possible in the valley. For more than forty years organized labor in Texas has openly fought the coming of the wetback, climaxing with testimony before a Congressional investigating com-

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mittee that came to the border in 1948 for a first-hand study of the problem.

On April 22, 1910, El Paso's Labor Advocate carried the following item:

"This resolution was adopted by a unanimous vote of the 13th convention of the Texas State Federation of Labor at Galveston the past week, this being the biggest convention ever held of this body.

"Whereas, at the El Paso Port of Entry there is practically no attention paid to the admission of Mexico's laborers who are entering the United States at the rate of more than one thousand per month, many of whom are partially skilled as musicians, carpenters, painters, tinners, etc., who are displacing home and citizen labor at less than living wages according to the American standard of living; and,

"Whereas, at the El Paso Port of Entry building contractors, railroad agents and labor agents have sub-agents in Old Mexico bringing this pauper class to this country, and it appears that no efforts are being put forth by the agents of the United States Bureau of Immigration to prevent such undesirable wholesale admission. Therefore be it

"Resolved, that the Texas State Federation of Labor, in convention assembled at Galveston, Texas, does hereby enter its solemn and sincere protest against such action, and the secretary-treasurer is hereby instructed to lay this matter and a copy of this resolution before the American Federation of Labor at Washington, D.C., at his earliest opportunity."

Through the years, labor has gone on protesting and passing resolutions—and the wetback has kept on marching over the border.

II

Until October 1948 the problem was confined to the border. Then the Immigration Service made its dramatic move

that focused national attention upon the wetback.

During the war the federal government had arranged to import tens of thousands of farm workers under "bracero" contracts, the Mexicans going into the agricultural states to replace men in the armed forces. The workers soon learned that a season among the Yanquis was good for a year-round grubstake.

Then the war ended and men poured back onto the farms from training camps and battlefields. At the same time, the Mexican government raised the objection that braceros were being treated badly, poorly paid, fed, and housed. Several states were blacklisted from obtaining contract workers. Texas was found to be one of the most objectionable, according to Mexican officials, and since the beginning of 1948 no contracts have been entered into with Texas farmers. Other states were hard hit by the Mexican move. And to aggravate the problem, the Latin-American axis of the Good Neighbor Policy delayed recruiting for the acceptable areas.

As harvest time approached in 1948, braceros who had not been recruited in their native states, and those who had made up the bulk of the recruits for the areas now barred, began their migration to the border, confident that work would be found somehow. Most of them had no money, only enough food to reach the border. As they swarmed into Juárez, Mexican and United States officials conferred hastily on the establishment of a recruiting center across the river. Cotton was opening. Frost was threatening the sugar-beet crop in Colorado. But Mexico was in no hurry to come to an agreement. Each day brought reports of a possible settlement and rumors that a center would be opened in a day or two. Agents recruiting labor for fields a thousand miles away were waiting for the green

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light in Juárez and El Paso. Thousands of braceros had gathered at the Juárez race track, often used by Villistas and other revolutionaries in besieging the strategic border city. They were hungry and bitter—and ripe for a desperate move.

Nudged by farmers and politicians, the Immigration Service acted suddenly in the crisis. Recruiting agents were supplied with certificates of need by the United States Employment Service. Their trucks were waiting a few hundred yards from the river. The Great Western Sugar Company representative had backed a special train into the El Paso depot yard, ready to haul the hundreds of men needed. He had set up an office, a packing box placed behind a billboard near the Immigration headquarters. Recruiting already had been completed in Juárez and the men needed by Great Western had been provided with identifying slips. Many farmers, told of the hunger of the workers, had loaded their trucks with dozens of loaves of bread, bologna, and other cheap edibles.

The workers filtered across for twenty-four hours while the Immigration Service blandly denied it was winking at the illegal entries, even while the truckloads of men were moving out of the city. Then orders came from higher up and the Service dropped all pretense. Word was spread in Juárez and the massed men waiting at the river bank stampeded across the railroad bridge leading to the Immigration headquarters.

In Juárez troops were called out to hold back the wetbacks—negotiations supposedly were continuing—but the troops were futile. Within forty-eight hours more than 7,500 Mexican workers had crossed the river, been processed as to name, age, and home address, and turned over to the farmers and recruiting agents.

Border Patrol officers worked around the clock to get the workers away from the border and into the fields. Then, the

needs supplied, the bars went up again and the officers returned to rounding up the illegal entries found in the El Paso valley. The wetback, dramatized in widely circulated news pictures as he waded the river—posed by an enterprising El Paso newspaperman and photographer—again was a local problem.

Nobody in a position to know would tell where the order came from authorizing the Immigration Service move, but politicians had been active for weeks earlier. When President Truman came to El Paso for a campaign address, the problem was laid before him by cotton men and by Texas and New Mexico Congressmen. Soon after his train moved east through Texas there was a meeting of top Immigration officials at El Paso. Then the gates went down for the unprecedented mass movement.

The incident was protested in Washington by Mexican officials as a treaty violation. The protest only pointed up the situation that has arisen in the Southwest as one more war baby. It continues a serious problem for the El Paso stretch of the irrigation district—blessing or menace, depending upon whether the problem is viewed by the highly caustic and well-informed labor leaders or by equally trenchant farmers in the area.

Valley men have estimated that a minimum of ninety per cent of the valuable cotton crop was picked by wetbacks in 1948, and ginned long before competing areas because of the plentiful supply of pickers. The local supply of farm labor, that once worked the fields with outside seasonal help from across the river, has moved out of the valley, unable or unwilling to work at the prevailing rate as whittled down by the oversupply. They have gone into the smelters and refineries flanking El Paso, and into the factories. Thousands have moved on to Colorado, Arizona, and California.

When the cotton farmer says he would be ruined if the supply of Mexican labor ended, he is telling the blunt truth. He could add, with equal verity, that the situation is one of his own making, from which he has reaped a golden harvest in competition with other cotton sections of the country.

John P. Swanson, assistant chief patrol inspector for the Immigration Service, has watched the problem developing for many years. He has talked with hundreds of employers who have told him without hesitation that they will not employ local workers to chop or pick their cotton.

Why?

Because, the farmer says, the native is lazy, discontented, and troublesome. Also, he wants a living wage, by American standards—low enough at the border.

Before the coming of the wetback in mass numbers, farmers each year were forced to round up workers against stiff competition—competition from others within the area and from distant growing regions. They had to send trucks to the workers' homes to pick them up in the morning and return them at night. The farmer is unquestionably better off with his imported labor supply and, therefore, the farmers turned their eyes across the river.

They built rude huts to house their migratory workers. They provided food—at a premium profit—for the labor army. Larger farms installed commissaries that could supply every need, including the picking bags the workers were required to provide as a condition of employment. And the farmers found they could depend upon a reasonable co-operation from the Immigration Service. The threat of deportation was enough to keep the wetbacks on the farms and away from the bars—and keep the malcontents in line. There was no union, no organization to

present grievances, and—the farmers said—the Mexicans would work harder, longer and more efficiently than their blood-brother American citizens.

There has been little interference with the farmers' labor supply at El Paso during the chopping and picking seasons. United States officials rarely enter upon a farm unless there has been a complaint. But the wetback found on the public highway, or in the taverns, or in small communities around El Paso, is vulnerable. He faces deportation if a first offender, prison at La Tuna Correctional Institution if a repeater. Two big round-ups are made each year, immediately after the spring planting and chopping and after the valuable fluff has been picked.

Housing and feeding the wetback who has been arrested and faces trial has become a major industry of the Sheriff's Department in El Paso. Arrests made by the Border Patrol totaled 22,554 for the fiscal year ending July 1, 1948. In the following six months there were 20,079 arrests. The flood of foreign labor expected in 1949 will jam the tanks and cells of the county jail with a record population as those reluctant to return to their homes are gathered in by the patrols.

The El Paso County sheriff receives \$1 for each day a federal prisoner is housed in the jail, to be accounted for to the county. In 1947 the amount received was close to \$100,000. In 1948, with a speed-up in hearings, the figure dropped slightly. But in 1949, even before the start of the cotton chopping, the revenue had risen to a record \$27,948 for the first three months.

Feeding the wetback on the farm also is an important industry, now monopolized by the farmers according to the bitter but furtive complaint of the merchants who fear total ruin if they openly protest. The wetback, confined to the

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farm where he is working, must depend upon his employer to supply his food. The larger farms have well-stocked commissaries. Smaller farmers take orders for foodstuffs, pick it up, and make deliveries. In all cases, investigation discloses, a good profit clings to the employers' fingers. In most of the commissaries, in 1948, a sixteen-cent loaf of bread sold for twenty-five cents. Beans, the Mexican staple, sold for from fifty to one hundred per cent above the price quoted in El Paso stores. Other mark-ups in work clothes, picking bags, and other needs were equally high. The bill presented to the worker on pay day made a deep gouge into his earnings, but there was no questioning the figures. For The Mexican peon could only take what was left and move on to the next field.

The agreed pay in 1948, for the first picking of the opened cotton, was \$1.50 a hundred pounds. The average picker is able to gather about 250 pounds from dawn to sunset. Hundreds of Mexicans brought their wives and children to work beside them in the fields, untouched by any child labor regulations.

How well is the wetback treated by his American employer? To answer this question I went into the fields with an interpreter. I observed the workers' homes, their living conditions. Answers were freely and cheerfully given. From what I saw and heard, not from the workers alone but from patrol inspectors, it was easy to conclude that the black slave of the pre-emancipation years was far better off. Uncle Tom at least had his cabin and a reasonably assured social security.

Mr. Swanson and some of his subordinates agree that slaves were treated better than the men on many farms they visited. "Peonage conditions under which the wetbacks frequently live, eat, and sleep can only be described as horrible," Swanson said.

He told of one case, fortunately an extreme, that arose at a time when early field workers, usually paid thirty cents an hour in 1948, had flooded the market and were willing to labor for far less than the federal government prescribed as the minimum for workers engaged in production for interstate commerce. "We investigated one complaint," Mr. Swanson said, "and found that the employer was paying his help only what they could eat. And he had instructed his foreman to make certain they didn't eat too much!" Some cotton pickers received as little as fifty cents a hundred.

Because of the outraged protests from inspectors who talked with wetbacks and arrests of workers at the farms of employers who exploited them most, valley farmers in 1948 raised the cry that the Immigration Service was trying to fix wages and conditions of employment at El Paso. Grover C. Wilmoth, long-time director of the Service, smilingly denied the charge but admitted it was only natural for the inspectors to be more sympathetic with the employer who paid a living wage and tried to give the worker a reasonably decent living condition.

Many farms in the valley have posted signs warning all visitors to keep out, lest they see too much of how the Good Neighbor Policy works as a practical matter. I could only guess at conditions behind the cotton curtain, using as a gauge what I saw on other farms.

Together with my interpreter I started my tour at a shack in the shadow of the patrol watch tower at San Elizario, below El Paso on the river. An enterprising woman had converted the shack into a boarding house to feed unmarried wetbacks for \$8 a week. She was having a slack period when we first called at her home because most of the men had returned to Juárez to celebrate the Mexican Independence Day on the 16th of Sep-

tember. They would be back in a few days, the woman told us.

Our next stop brought us to a colony of workers quartered in crude buildings made by tacking scrap tin over a rough framework. Children played on the dirt floor and cooking was going on in the yard, over an open fire. September is a hot month in El Paso and the flies swarmed over the food and the children, attracted by the refuse in the nearby fields that offered the only sanitation—not even open pit plumbing available. Children old enough to drag a small-sized picking bag through the irrigation furrows were out in the field at their hard work, the labor that brings on the telltale scars and callouses. In El Paso's police court a vagrant who claims to be a migratory cotton picker is given away by a quick glance at his hands. The veteran picker carries his identification badge from year to year in his hardened hands.

On many of the farms there was no provision for shelter, strictly catch-as-catch-can. The men, and often the women, slept under the long cotton wagons, under trees, in trucks, or in the open fields. The flies, valley mosquitoes, and other insects of the southwestern summer, crawled over the workers by night. They welcomed sunrise each morning as an escape to the fields. On the larger farms the makeshift housing often was a big improvement. There were the rude adobe huts, some with screens, and rows of tents moved in for the season.

Inspectors early discovered a racket being perpetrated by some of the more greedy farmers—and proceeded to smash it. The employer would work his wetbacks until the cotton was picked and sent off to the gin, then call the Immigration Service to come and remove "troublesome" workers and haul them off to the county jail—before they could collect their pay. Inspectors began re-

turning to the farms to pick up the payroll for the deportees, and the practice stopped.

Wives bearing children in America offer another problem to Immigration officials because of the generous laxity of naturalization laws. When a Mexican national gives birth to a child on the American side of the Rio Grande—a United States citizen by having been born here—the parents will not be deported because it would work an undue hardship on the infant citizen. As a result, the parents are admissible to citizenship even though they cannot qualify on literacy and know nothing of the government of the United States or any responsibilities of citizenship. And once they are naturalized, their other children are quickly admitted.

An El Paso Naturalization official told me there were 1,600 such "hardship cases" pending in 1949. The law requires that a copy of the proceedings be given to each such applicant, and the copy is carefully studied by English-speaking friends. It is taken to the padre for further study, and the loophole quickly gets around among the Mexican population near the border.

Many women, expecting children, wait until a few days before the expected delivery and then cross the river to give birth on the American side, the birth being duly recorded on the county records and constituting an insurance policy against deportation. Many foreigners who could not expect to be admitted legally, because of physical disabilities or illiteracy, find safe harbor in Texas while desirable aliens wait and hope for admission. The others are here to stay.

Another loophole of the law allows aliens who entered illegally to become citizens after seven years of residence, if they have no police record. Thousands of the wetbacks, and other braceros, are

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scattered through the country today in agricultural communities, waiting until they, too, may claim citizenship and immunity from return to the peon conditions of Mexican agriculture.

It was inevitable that the wetback would bring on a deep resentment from those already in the El Paso valley. One war veteran told of having worked sixty hours on a farm in his work week, at a \$5 daily wage as a tractor operator. He was satisfied, he said, but soon lost his job to a wetback who would work the tractor for \$3. The story is told over and over again.

Valley merchants, begging us not to use their names, told of the loss of income by the displacement of local workers. Simple arithmetic showed why their income had shrunk heavily since the mass coming of the wetback. The newcomers would buy only what they needed for a bare existence among the Yanquis, hoarding their precious dollars that would buy so much more when turned into pesos and spent below the border. One of the protests against the wetback has come from an El Paso post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who asked an investigation of what they called the "destruction of little businessmen."

A startling fact uncovered in canvassing the valley farms was how many are owned by El Paso's most substantial residents who flaunt their "Americanism" while exploiting foreign citizens. One heavy property owner is a judge, another a banker, a third a legislator, and on through a roll-call of business and commercial leaders. They are only playing the game as they find it, no better and no worse than their neighbor cotton-growers. They are taking advantage of a profit belt in cotton that has pushed the cost of irrigated land up to \$1,000 an acre—where any can be bought.

Many wetbacks, skilled or semi-skilled, use the cotton fields only as a wedge to work into other occupations around El Paso. George Webber, executive secretary of the El Paso Central Labor Union and a member of the seven-man executive board of the National Farm Labor Union, estimates there are between 6,000 and 9,000 illegal workers from Mexico out of a total labor force in El Paso of about 21,000. Many of the non-agricultural workers enter under false working permits, issued to other persons who have sold or given them away to friends. Much of El Paso's 1948-49 new housing construction has been done by wetbacks, working beside union electricians or plumbers.

"We are fighting the cheap, unorganized labor constantly," Webber said, "but we must face and recognize the inevitable. So long as the United States Government allows the cheap labor to cross the river we are all but helpless in trying to obtain a fair labor scale in the area. And Congress hasn't the guts to pass a law that would really hit at the wetback. When I appeared before the committee investigating in El Paso in 1948 I gave them the answer. All they would have to do is pass a law making the employer equally liable with the employee for hiring a wetback. The first time a cotton-planter went to prison for a year and a day, you would see the practice disappear overnight. But they weren't interested. They were only shadowboxing with the problem and talking piously of make-shift measures."

Webber, who is the AFL organizer in the Southwest, called the wetback the number one enemy of organized labor at the border.

The inevitable result of the wetbacks' presence is a lowering of living conditions as the influx of peons brings with it a demand for less modern improvements

than the natives have come to take for granted. And El Paso is losing its fight to Americanize its Latin-American youngsters when a constant influx of children who speak no English pours into the city's schools and those operated by the county in the outlying districts. At one high school, with an almost 100 per cent Latin-American enrollment, the principal has suspended dozens of children for violating the rule against speaking other than English in the school or school yard. But it is a hopeless battle. The children return to their homes and never speak a word of English until they again enter the classroom.

III

There is trouble ahead, and both labor officials and Immigration inspectors know it. The army of wetbacks has become an annual invasion and their cheap labor a fixture. When employment slackens, and competition for jobs in El Paso's industrial fields becomes more acute, you may start looking for danger signals on the border. There will be a concerted move to close the floodgates and oust the illegal workers, countered by the opposition of farmers and employers who have the power in their hands at present to resist labor's battle that has shuttled between El Paso and Washington.

Organized labor, with its back to the wall, will make a stronger fight to Americanize the working force—and organize it. The Good Neighbor Policy, stripped to its fundamentals, will be shown for the window-dressing it is known to be all along the border.

An example of the tenacity with which the farmers cling to their labor bargain in the Rio Grande valley was their invoking of an old Texas law against recruiting workers, to bar outsiders from taking away their cheap labor and causing a return to the old seller's market in cotton

picking. By invoking that law they enlisted local as well as federal authorities on their side to keep the wetbacks bottled up in the valley where they are at the employers' mercy. There were arrests and prosecutions in 1948 when farmers from the Pecos Valley, or other areas where there was a serious labor shortage, came into the city looking for workers. Road blocks set up by officials intercepted and searched trucks suspected of carrying wetbacks to outlying fields. When officials examined a watering tank they found its iron walls were filled with human cargo, several near death from thirst and from the terrific heat cooking the walls of the tank.

There is an interesting sidelight discovered by Immigration Service men when they began registering the wetbacks in October. They found a number gave El Paso as their address. They had crossed into Juárez, they said, waded back across the river, and joined the columns moving through the patrol headquarters. It was the only way—as wetbacks—that they could get a job barred to them as a United States citizen.

"Farmers have told me they would give up their lands before they would use local workers," Mr. Swanson told me. "Recently our men rounded up the wetbacks on a farm and the owner bitterly complained and demanded an answer to the problem of how he was to get his cotton picked. I was ready for him and told him there were five carloads of American citizens from east Texas then waiting a few miles away, unable to get work. He mumbled something and turned away. The next day there were more wetbacks on his farm. It was the same throughout the valley. Open hostility against any American agricultural worker. We finally sent the Texans into the Pecos Valley where there would be plenty of work for them—at a higher rate of pay."

The wetback problem isn't peculiar to El Paso. A much larger army of Mexicans is rounded up annually in the San Antonio area. California has its mounting problem of the undesirable visitors from below the border who come for a season and stay to become a tax burden. But in El Paso, because of its native population, the problem is more acute.

Lines are drawn for the 1949 battle. Declining cotton prices—still supported by a subsidy floor—and greater unemployment, can lead to nothing but trouble. The Immigration Service will be caught squarely between two warring forces, labor battling to maintain living standards, and farmers struggling to hold onto their profit levels.

The Border Patrol is ready—and waiting.

Art Leibson is a reporter on the staff of the El Paso Times, and this report on the wetback situation in the El Paso area is one of two appended documents

included in "Wetbacks, A Preliminary Report," issued June 9, 1949, by Lyle Saunders, research associate, and George I. Sánchez, director, of the Study of Spanish-Speaking People, under way at the University of Texas. The Report explains: "Mr. Leibson originally planned a series of newspaper articles on the wetbacks to run in the Times. The first article appeared in October 1948 on the day that the El Paso break-through occurred. As a result of that and subsequent developments, the series was canceled. At our suggestion [Study of Spanish-Speaking People], Mr. Leibson made additional investigations and incorporated his findings, together with the material he had gathered for the Times series, in the report which we reproduce here. Mr. Leibson's point of view is that of a disinterested observer. He reports the situation as it looks to a man who is neither a farmer, a labor organizer, a public official, or an intensive student of social problems, but who can see and understand something of the viewpoint and special position of each."

THE AMERICAN STANDARD— FOR ALL AMERICANS

PAULINE R. KIBBE

WHEN the Commission of Inquiry into Forced Labor met in New York City the latter part of February 1949, it listened for three days to the testimony of competent witnesses on peonage and slave labor existing today throughout the world.

Members of the Commission had been carefully selected by the Workers' Defense League, under whose auspices the hearings were held, and included figures

of nationwide prominence in the fields of education, politics, business, and religion. The purpose of the hearings was to compile evidence for presentation to the United Nations, with the ultimate objective of bringing about action by that body to correct the conditions described.

As was to be expected, much of the testimony related to slave labor within the Soviet Union and its satellite states.

Other areas emphasized were Latin America and the United States. The conditions complained of in the United States included the indignities forced upon loyal Japanese Americans during the war, the continuing enslavement of Negroes in some parts of the South, and the virtual peonage of Mexican American agricultural workers in the state of Texas, occasioned by the unchecked tide of wetbacks surging across the Rio Grande.

One member of the Commission was so violently anti-Russian in his sentiments that he strenuously resisted the introduction of evidence pointing up sore spots within the United States. It was his desire that the transcript delivered to the United Nations be a devastating indictment of communism and the Communist regime, with no detracting irrelevancies. To that end, he attempted to confuse witnesses and trick them into admitting that, whatever their pet peeve might be, it could not, of course, be mentioned in the same breath with the horror of life in the Soviet Union. In this he was thwarted by the witnesses themselves and by other members of the Commission.

Any comparison of the abuses and inequalities suffered by the Mexican Americans in Texas with those to which the inmates of Russian slave-labor camps are subjected is futile. This is not the Soviet Union. This is the United States of America. It is to us—not to the Soviet Union—that the fear-ridden peoples of the world are looking for leadership. To fulfill that responsibility, to justify that trust, it is imperative that we extend the benefits of our democracy to our own people, that we make the American standard of living a standard of living for *all* Americans. The enormity of our shortcomings can be judged only by the standards we claim for ourselves: not by those of any other country.

II

The scope and seriousness of the problems of Mexican Americans in Texas are not generally understood. They have always had a national as well as an international significance. But developments during the past two or three years have set out, in bold relief, the absolute necessity for a concerted attack on the problems from two directions: regulation by the federal government, and energetic activity on the part of organized labor.

A great many Texans are not going to like either approach. Nevertheless, the government of the state has proved its impotence and actual disinclination to remedy the situation. The time has come for action of a different kind.

Let's see what this is all about.

It is the wetback who has brought matters to a focal point. "Wetback" is the term used to describe a Mexican citizen who effects an illegal entry into this country by wading, swimming, or rowing across the Rio Grande. His name is legion. He is disrupting the already unstable economy of Texas, permanently displacing thousands of American citizens of Mexican descent, forcing their migration to slum areas of towns and cities in and out of Texas where they, in turn, glut the skilled and unskilled labor market, depressing wages for all workers.

There have always been wetbacks in Texas and throughout the border area, but the real invasion began during the war years when many of the seasonal agricultural laborers who had perennially harvested the fruit and vegetable and cotton crops of the state were serving in the armed forces. Workers from Mexico came in illegally, rather than under contract, for a very good reason. In June 1943, the Mexican government flatly refused to contract labor to Texas farmers and grow-

ers because of the many forms of discrimination practiced against Mexicans and persons of Mexican descent within the state.

The fact that the wetbacks came in, by the hundreds and by the thousands, despite the widely publicized discrimination, was due to a number of pressures on both sides of the Rio Grande.

The cost of living in Mexico was going up, even more rapidly than in this country, and in May 1948 stood at 314.2, with a norm for 1939 of 100 as a basis. The agrarian program in Mexico had not developed to the point where it could provide a living wage for more than a fraction of the rural population. People on the verge of starvation are not likely to consider discrimination too seriously when rosy promises of food are held out to them from the other side of a river that is dry, or nearly so, much of the year.

Adamant though it was in its determination that agricultural workers should not come into Texas, the Mexican government was powerless to effectively patrol the river; and petty officials both along the border and in the interior were easily induced, for a price, to assist the agents of Texas farmers and growers in rounding up and herding to the border droves of peons and peasants.

Enforcement of Mexico's ban from this side of the river was the responsibility of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. While it can be conceded that the Service was undermanned during the war, it must also be admitted that the pleas of citrus, vegetable, and cotton growers, individually and through their respective associations, fell upon receptive ears. The Immigration Service accepted the assertions of the growers that the shortage of labor on the farms and in the fields was so acute that the decree of the Mexican government must be ignored if the crops were to be harvested.

It was an easy matter for the Immigration Service to comply with the wishes of the growers. Wetbacks were unmolested except when they appeared openly in the towns or on the highways. In that event, they were rounded up, taken to the nearest port of entry, and released on the other side. Sometimes the wetback would beat the Immigration officer back across the river. There are instances on record where one wetback was deported as many as four times in a twenty-four hour period.

But the real villains of this international conspiracy were, and are, the growers themselves. Not even during the war years did they ever succeed in proving a real shortage of labor in agriculture. Their concern has always been, and continues to be, cheap labor in abundance.

The citrus groves, the extensive vegetable farms, the vast expanse of cotton acreage—in combination, a very important segment of Texas economy—all have been developed by cheap, Mexican labor. Year after year, beginning about 1900, Texas growers recruited labor in Mexico. The wages promised were not always paid, and even when paid proved woefully inadequate for the support of families, many of whom, each year, elected to remain in Texas. The following year, it would be necessary for the growers to recruit new workers in Mexico, since those of previous years had learned the value of American money and knew it could be stretched just so far and no farther.

Thus the Mexican American population of Texas increased from approximately 70,000 in the year 1900 to an estimated 1,250,000 in 1948. This figure is exclusive of the wetbacks now in the state. One out of every six Texans is of Mexican descent. At least half of the total is dependent upon agriculture, in one form or another, for its livelihood.

These are the people who not only

chop and pick the cotton, harvest and pack the citrus fruits, cultivate and cut the spinach, and pull and bunch the onions, carrots, beets, and radishes of Texas; they are the same people who, in large measure, tend and harvest the sugar beets of many northern and northwestern states, help to pick the cotton in Arkansas, New Mexico, and numerous other states, and assist in many areas outside Texas during the fruit and vegetable season.

Nominally, these migratory Texans are residents of the state—80 per cent are United States citizens by birth or naturalization, and the others are legal residents—but actually they constitute a floating population of the country as a whole.

Many acute problems are inherent in the seasonal and migratory nature of their employment: problems in economics, education, health, sanitation, and civil rights. Because they are of the same national origin, and because there is not and cannot be any clear-cut line of demarcation, the remaining 600,000 or so Mexican Americans in Texas, who through the years have found permanent employment in other fields and have attained a certain educational and economic status, suffer, to a greater or less extent, the same inequalities, the same social ostracism, the same denial of civil rights.

At the root of all other problems of Mexican Americans in Texas is the economic situation. Enforced "cheap" labor in Texas has bred the same evils that cheap labor breeds any place: a tuberculosis death rate among Mexican Americans which is seven times that of Anglos; a third-grade level of education; a fantastically high mortality from diarrhea in Mexican American infants under two years of age; rural and urban slums that are unspeakable; segregation of Mexican American children in the public schools (until the decision of a federal judge abolished it in the summer of

1948), effective in the first three grades in some schools, extending through twelve grades in others; refusal of service in some public places of business and amusement, regardless of social or economic status or the number of generations of U.S. citizenship the victim may be able to claim; denial of the right to vote, or to serve on juries, or to own or rent real estate in certain areas.

III

These were the conditions which existed even before the real invasion of wetbacks began.

Late in 1946 the Mexican government admitted that at least 119,000 of its citizens were illegally resident in the border area of the United States. Of that number, a minimum of 50,000 were conceded to be in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

Lacking the power and the means through which to secure the return of these 119,000 wetbacks to Mexico, and being equally powerless to provide for their upkeep should they all go home, the Mexican government, on January 31, 1947, entered into an agreement with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service by the terms of which the presence of the 119,000 aliens was to be legalized through the signing of contracts with employers. Among other things, such contracts were to provide for the payment of the "prevailing wage" in each area. Three Mexican ports of entry—Reynosa, Ciudad Juárez, and Mexicali—were designated as the points to which employers would take their wetbacks for the legalization process, which began at Reynosa on April 21, 1947. (This was, perhaps, symbolic, for April 21 is the date celebrated in Texas as San Jacinto Day, commemorating the final defeat of the Mexican forces under Santa Ana at San Jacinto, near Houston, on April 21, 1836.)

On that and succeeding days, Texas growers acquitted themselves in a manner typical of their long history of dealing with Mexican labor. They certified that the prevailing wage rate in the Lower Rio Grande Valley was 25 cents an hour: this in the face of the fact that employers in the El Paso-New Mexico area were certifying to a wage rate of from 37½ to 45 cents an hour, and in California to as much as 65 cents an hour, for the same labor, to produce the same crops, to be sent to the same markets, to bring the same prices.

What the Valley employers failed to make clear, of course, was that 25 cents an hour was the prevailing wage for wetback labor. Even that admission would not have been accurate, since 25 cents an hour was the exception rather than the rule. Many employers confided that they were actually paying 10 cents, or 15 cents, at the most, for wetback labor.

The war was well over by April of 1947. The thousands of Mexican American boys who had served in the armed forces had long since returned to their homes; and, for all but a few of them, the 52-20 payments had about run their limit. Their jobs had been usurped by 50,000 wetbacks, whose status was now being legalized, and at an accepted wage rate of 25 cents an hour. On the basis of a ten-hour day, six days a week, that would mean a maximum possible income of \$15 a week; only one doesn't work a regular ten-hour day or six-day week in agriculture. The work is seasonal and entirely dependent upon the weather.

Nevertheless, the situation was made clear to resident agricultural workers, including veterans and their families: We can get all the Mexican labor we want for 25 cents an hour. You will accept the same wage, or else. The majority chose "or else."

The signing of contracts continued un-

til early in September 1947, when the Mexican government, convinced that the wage rate agreed upon was too low and that Texas growers were not living up to other provisions of the contract, such as those calling for suitable housing and sanitary facilities, firmly put an end to the legalization process so far as Texas was concerned, and cancelled all existing contracts with Texas growers.

The wetbacks, again illegal, not only stayed put, but their ranks were swollen daily by new arrivals. Only now there was no minimum wage, not even on paper. The growers were having—and are still having—a field day.

A migration of unprecedented proportions and of a new character began in the Valley and in South Texas generally. Some families of resident agricultural workers left early for northern and eastern states, intending to return again to their homes; but many others embarked upon a quest of another sort. They carried their household goods with them with the intention of founding new homes in towns and cities. Some stopped in Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, and Fort Worth; some in the smaller towns in between. Some left Texas behind entirely.

In each instance they crowded into the already overcrowded slum areas or threw up new, makeshift dwellings on the fringes of the slums. Being totally inexperienced in any work except agriculture, they began, through force of circumstances, to undercut on unskilled and semi-skilled jobs of many kinds. Employers, broadly speaking, are never slow or reluctant to take advantage of a kind fate which offers an opportunity to reduce operating costs. Furthermore, a surplus of workers is always an effective threat in keeping one's employees in line, and particularly in preventing the organization of a plant. It is, apparently, an exciting game to play off a desperate man

against one whose economic security is being threatened so that wages may remain "fair."

The process of displacement, reaching out in ever-widening circles across the nation, is by no means new. It has merely become greatly accelerated in the last two or three years. Mexican colonies have sprung up in states that heretofore had no Mexican population whatever. The long-established colonies in Chicago, Detroit, and other large cities have increased in size.

As one concrete example of what is happening, we can look at Arkansas. In the 1930s, the cotton crop of Arkansas was harvested almost entirely by Negroes resident in that state. By 1948, however, according to the U.S. Employment Service, 12,838 Mexican Americans from Texas and contract laborers from Mexico were picking Arkansas' cotton. This meant that the Negroes who formerly did the work had been forced to migrate to the cities, or out of the state altogether, where they, too, aggravated existing slum conditions and undercut on jobs in business and industry.

In Texas, the wetbacks have been used to defeat organizational efforts of labor unions. The National Labor Relations Board confirms the fact that on November 10, 1948, and with the cooperation of the Border Patrol, wetbacks were used to interfere with an NLRB election at the Rio Grande Valley Gas Company, Harlingen, Texas. Almost all of the 140 employees in the plant were Mexicans or of Mexican descent. It was no secret to the employer that many of them were illegally in this country. About ten minutes before the NLRB official was to open the polls on the morning of the election, Border Patrolmen entered the plant, rounded up ten or more of the aliens, and deported them. All were back on the job the day after the election.

This is only one instance. With the assistance of the Immigration Service and the United States Consul in Nuevo Laredo, Mexican Nationals were imported into Laredo in 1947 to break a strike of the employees of four import-export firms. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers had the same experience in El Paso, also in 1947.

The spotlight of national publicity was trained, if but briefly, upon the wetback situation in Texas in October 1948, when the U.S. Immigration Service made an amazing move.

The cotton growers of West Texas had been badgering the Mexican Consuls General in San Antonio and El Paso for months with their demands for contract labor. As usual, they offered no proof of any shortage of domestic labor. Even if they had been able to do so, their demands would still have been denied in view of the Mexican government's steadfast refusal to permit laborers to enter Texas legally. Not only did they demand special dispensation from the Mexican government, but they also wanted a reduction in the contractual wage rate. Cotton pickers under contract to growers in Arkansas, Mississippi, and other cotton-producing states last year were guaranteed a wage rate of \$3 per hundred pounds on the first picking, and a rising scale for each additional picking. The West Texas growers insisted upon contract labor from Mexico, but they likewise insisted that the wage be \$2 per hundred pounds.

When their demands were unequivocally refused, the cotton growers hatched out a neat scheme. It worked, too.

They poured their troubles into the sympathetic ears of the Chief of the Immigration Service at El Paso and the Director of the U.S. Employment Service and convinced them that without a plentiful supply of labor from across the

river West Texas cotton would rot in the fields. These soft-hearted officials of the United States government apparently agreed that in the face of such an imminent catastrophe an international treaty and the goodwill of nations were of no significance whatever. Accordingly, the glad tidings were carried across the river and before dawn one morning in the early part of October a horde of shadowy figures began a wholesale invasion of the El Paso area. No one tried to stop them. Once on this side, they were placed under technical arrest by Immigration officers, immediately paroled to the U.S. Employment Service, and loaded into waiting trucks driven by agents of West Texas cotton growers.

More than 7,000 wetbacks crossed the river before the border was closed again three days later. It took that long before the Chief of the Immigration Service became convinced either that his friends in West Texas had a plentiful supply of labor or that he had exceeded his authority.

Neither the governor of Texas nor that state's official agency especially charged with protecting and furthering the interests of persons of Mexican descent—the Good Neighbor Commission—registered any protest with the federal government concerning the break-through at El Paso. The Good Neighbor Commission, as it was originally constituted in 1943 and during the first four years of its life, did much to advance the cause of Mexican Americans in the state and to bring about an intelligent understanding of their problems on the part of Anglo Texans.

But with the advent of a new governor in 1947—a governor elected with the financial support of large interests such as the oil and sulphur industries, the citrus and vegetable growers' associations, and the cotton growers' association

—the Commission has, to all intents and purposes, ceased to function. The fact that 7,000 destitute workers had been added within a three-day period to the already clogged labor market in Texas was obviously of no concern whatever to the Governor or his Commission. One might reasonably conclude that the break-through was a matter of prior knowledge to them.

Vigorous protests were registered with President Truman and Attorney General Tom Clark by the Mexican Consular Service, the League of United Latin American Citizens and other Mexican American organizations, the Texas State Industrial Union Council—CIO, the American Federation of Labor, and a number of individual union heads.

IV

The Mexican invasion continues. The number of wetbacks now in the state of Texas, according to reliable authorities, exceeds 100,000. Great as is the economic need of the Mexican workers in their own country, they are, on the whole, an humble group, and it is not conceivable that they would so openly and consistently violate the laws of two countries without strong encouragement from what cannot be called anything but a fifth column in Texas.

It should be abundantly clear from all the foregoing that the state of Texas cannot, or will not, do anything to stem the tide. The remedy must be administered by the federal government.

There can be no question but that our immigration policy and program on the Mexican border is bankrupt and a shocking disgrace to the entire country. Open connivance with private interests, at extreme variance with the public policies of two governments; overt violation of an international treaty; individual and collective insult to the dignity and sover-

eignty of a friendly and neighboring republic—these are sins on the part of a federal agency which cannot be overlooked or condoned.

Bear in mind that in this vicious progression—wetbacks displacing domestic agricultural labor and depressing wages; displaced agricultural workers invading towns and cities and, in turn, displacing workers in business and industry, at substandard wages, etc., etc.—we have the pretty spectacle of the breakdown of our immigration system on the border interfering with the wage scales in both agriculture and industry for Anglos and Negroes as well as for Mexican Americans.

The recommendations which follow may very well revive (if, indeed, it has ever died down) the old battle cry of “states’ rights.” There is no better smoke screen for bigotry, or avarice, or failure. The state of Texas has had the “right,” as well as the obligation, for at least fifty years to rectify the unsavory conditions under which its Mexican American population has always labored. Now the time has come when the implications, not to mention the stench, of those conditions reach far beyond the boundaries of the state.

First, I respectfully recommend that the President of the United States appoint a Presidential Commission, similar in composition to his Committee on Civil Rights, and instruct it to investigate, thoroughly and painstakingly, all aspects of this complex problem, from both the domestic and international standpoints. The conclusions and recommendations of such a Commission would serve as a blueprint for action by the federal government.

Secondly, I urge the Congress of the United States to make the employment of illegal aliens a federal offense, punishable by a heavy fine and/or imprisonment. No other measure could so effectively and im-

mediately terminate the flow of wetbacks across our borders. The wetback himself cannot be punished, except by informal deportation, from which he rebounds like a rubber ball. So long as employers are crying for his services, he is coming across the river. Only the employer can be controlled by legislation, and it must be federal legislation. The powerful lobbies of the citrus, vegetable, and cotton growers’ associations would kill such a bill in the embryo stage in the Texas legislature.

Concurrently, or beforehand, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the U.S. Employment Service, should be transferred to the U.S. Department of Labor to which they both, by their very nature, belong.

So far as the Mexican American citizens and residents of Texas are concerned, nothing would go farther toward the solution of their economic problems and thereby the eventual solution of all their other problems, than an all-out organizing drive on the part of trade unions. Unity on any front, for any purpose, is something the Mexican Americans have been successfully prevented from achieving up to now. Organization is imperative if economic security is to be attained.

Increasingly, during the past few years, Mexican Americans have been accepted into trade unions all over Texas. But organized labor has been able to make almost no headway in the field where it is most desperately needed: in agriculture. Nor can organization be effected until the wetback—a potent weapon of fear and intimidation in the hands of the employer—is permanently disposed of. Once the wetback has been removed from the scene and the agricultural workers united in a strong trade union, corporate farms and other apparently soulless employers will find themselves forced to the collective bargaining table.

The mere mention of organized labor

conjures up nameless terrors for some people. For the citrus and vegetable growers' association in the Valley, where the need for organized labor is perhaps most urgent, it hangs as the Sword of Damocles. This fear is understandable, for organized labor is the natural enemy of any feudal system.

But those who produce the citrus fruits, the vegetables, and the cotton of Texas, as well as the gentleman mentioned in the first paragraphs of this article, might much more profitably concern themselves with the real threat which lurks in the un-American conditions of life they are perpetuating (and ignoring) among the Mexican Americans in Texas. No longer ago than the summer of 1948 I had occasion to attend various meetings of Mexican Americans at widely separated points in Texas. These were workers' meetings. Those in attendance were, for the most part, United States citizens, many of them of the second or third generations. But they were, nevertheless, downtrodden, underprivileged people—people who had never had anything and who saw no prospect of making anything of themselves, the situation being as it is in Texas. Much of the conversation and most of the speeches were in Spanish, and my blood ran cold at the recurrence of such expressions as the "proletariat," the "masses," the "workers of the world," etc. These people were not Communists. They did not know it was the Communist line they were parroting. But their never-ending frustrations had made them ripe for insidious Communist propaganda.

The simple logic of the thing is that, in a land of plenty, when one is deprived of an education, poverty-stricken, denied civil, social, and economic rights, and subjected to all manner of indignities, one automatically looks for relief from some quarter. To the uninformed and underprivileged, the Communist line sounds

good, even when they have never heard of the Communist Party.

I agree that the slave-labor camps in the Soviet Union are a blot upon the face of the earth and should be eliminated. At the same time, I am much more concerned that the conditions in Texas which are rapidly preparing the soil in which communism can easily take root and flourish be corrected once and for all.

Pauline R. Kibbe was the first executive secretary of the Good Neighbor Commission of Texas, set up in 1943 by former Governor Coke R. Stevenson. She continued to serve in that capacity until her resignation in August of 1947, a resignation forced by the pressure of the citrus and vegetable growers' lobby on the new governor and State Senate, as a result of Mrs. Kibbe's vociferous objections to the 25-cent minimum wage for wetbacks then in process of legalization. Her book, *Latin Americans in Texas*, published by the University of New Mexico Press in late 1946, won the Anisfield-Wolf award of \$1,000 for being the best book "of a scientific nature" on race relations published in the United States in 1946. For most of 1948 Mrs. Kibbe served as Texas State Director for the National CIO Political Action Committee. Since December of 1948 she has been assistant director of research and education for the Oil Workers International Union—CIO.

For further documentation of the wetback and general Mexican American situation in the United States, readers who may have missed the Summer 1949 issue of CG are referred to the symposium there by Hart Stilwell, R. L. Chambers, Carey McWilliams, and Ernesto Galarza. See also, on page 61 in this issue, Beatrice W. Griffith's "Viva Roybal—Viva America" for a description of the growing political consciousness of the Los Angeles Mexican American population.

LILY

ESTELLE WEBB THOMAS

HER NAVAJO name was Achinebah, but the boys labeled her "Lily," and Achinebah, whose "white" or school name had been Jane, said she liked Lily better and it was O.K. by her. Of course, she did not know their explanation—that she toiled not, neither did she spin, yet Solomon, in all his glory was not arrayed like Lily when first we saw her. Little Kay always protested earnestly, when this was mentioned, "She weaves, though. She's a good rug weaver!"

Actually, Lily grew to be an excellent worker in the years we knew her so intimately; moreover, she learned our "ways" and could take over the complicated machinery of our household at almost a moment's notice. We had just been transferred to another Indian School for some special work my husband was to do there. Our quarters were old and badly run-down, in sad contrast to the roomy, wide-lawned, rose-arbored place we had left. My mother, a semi-invalid; was made ill by the move; the boys and Kay immediately came down with measles, a most inappropriate disease for the boys since they were almost grown and had passed up all opportunities to have contagious ailments when they were children. To complete the dreary situation, I slipped on the waxed floor and broke my "tail-bone," as the Government doctor elegantly phrased it, so John, my husband, began at once a frantic search for an Indian girl who could take over the cleaning and settling in the new quarters. We were delighted when Notah, one of John's

men, diffidently suggested that his wife would come.

When Mrs. Notah turned up next morning, only an hour late, it would have been easier to imagine she was en route to some festival than prepared for a day of scrubbing and sweeping. She was regally clothed in royal blue chiffon velvet, the tight blouse trimmed with silver buttons, in the shape of tiny shells down the front and on the cuffs. The full skirt, twelve yards wide we later learned, billowed to her feet over five or six petticoats; around her neck were several heavy necklaces of silver and turquoise in the symbolic squash blossom design, and her small hands and wrists were loaded with silver and turquoise rings and bracelets. A belt of silver conchos encircled her round waist.

Her face was round and pretty, with full, pouting lips and great, liquid, almond-shaped eyes. Her hair, long, glossy and black, was parted in the middle and neatly done in the traditional Navajo manner and fastened with white twine. About her body, beneath the arms, she lightly held a beautiful fringed blanket, without which no Navajo woman feels fully clothed.

She seemed reserved rather than shy, with a natural dignity that won us all. The idea of setting this gorgeous creature to work—a bride at that, for Notah had told John they were newly married—seemed sacrilege. Mother, captivated at once, invited Achinebah into her room to lay aside her blanket and get acquaint-

ed. They had a wonderful visit; I could hear Mother's charming voice going on and on and Lily's appreciative giggle or low-toned reply. When I called them to lunch, they were fast friends. Mother had shown her how to do monk's cloth embroidery and Lily had promised to teach Mother Navajo weaving. (Incidentally, I had made some headway with the cleaning.) From that day until we returned to our former Agency six years later, Lily's life was woven inextricably into ours. Lily knew all the reservation gossip and, naturally, all the Navajo creeds, superstitions, taboos, and folk tales, and was one of the few Navajo women I have known who really like to talk. She was always brimming with news, not only about the other Navajos but about the "English" ladies in whose homes she sometimes helped. Lily never spoke of white people. Since the language was not "white" but "English," the people who spoke it were English, too.

She came one day to tell us she could not help with the cleaning that week. She had been engaged by the Superintendent the day before to prepare a newly vacated house for the next tenant and was "all tire out." "That corners!" she exclaimed, disgustedly. "Under that beds! That English lady was more dirty than us Navajos!"

Mother taught her to knit socks for Notah, and the sound of their low voices and the clack of their needles was punctuated by frequent bursts of delighted laughter as Lily retailed choice bits of reservation lore. One hilarious story was of Mr. Crazy Woman's Man who, being unable to read, gave his wife a package of laxative gum and she chewed it all at once with disastrous results. Lily kept repeating, between giggles, "An' no water! No water at all, till he haul it fifteen mile in de wagon!"

One day she indignantly showed us a

letter from her brother to the local Trader who, after forwarding the boy some money, had given the letter to Lily. It seemed Sam had gone to Arizona to work, and Lily's indignation was for the bus driver who had failed to put him off at the proper station. The letter read:

"Dear Mr. Trader Sir

By top side of this letter you see I am which State. I am a mistake is why I am here. This bus ride is too much hot and sleepy. I am pass over State of Ariz. and not know. Job is sit in Ariz. waiting. Me I am sit in California no money. Please to send money for Arizona again.

Sam Begay."

Lily's big heart, so easily touched, sometimes made for complications. We came home from town one day to find every closet denuded of coats, suits, and dresses. "Why, Lily, what happened?" I asked, when I had verified this. "I geef heem to de Odorless Lady," Lily replied, placidly ironing. When I continued to look bewildered, she explained, "It too badt she mus' drive that beeg ole truck ternny-fi' mile for nawthings!" No wonder the woman driver of the Odorless Cleaners had waved so gaily when we met her en route from town!

Once when the family had to make an unexpected trip to town, we sent for Lily to bottle a lug of peaches which would not keep. Forgetting how literal she was, I hastily told her to follow the instructions that came with the jars and she could not go wrong. We returned to find the house like an oven, windows and doors closed, curtains drawn, even a rug rolled against the bottom of the kitchen door where a faint line showed. Lily, dripping with perspiration, admitted us through the narrowest possible crack and banged the door shut behind us.

"I do no more fruit!" she announced positively, before we could start asking

questions. "Dis direction for bottle fruit you gave me say, shut out all air. Me, I, a Navajo—Navajos can't live widout air!"

It was inevitable that, knowing Notah and Lily, we should also get to know Kee, at least so far as any white person could know Kee. The three were almost inseparable. Kee did not work for John. So far as I know, he didn't work for anyone, for he seemed to have all the time in the world. But he must have had his own flock of sheep and farm as a source of income, because he was always handsomely dressed, leather jacket, silk shirt, big Stetson hat, wide silver concho belt, fringed gloves, and expensive boots—and of course, the inevitable levis. His horse, which seemed like that of Cortez a part of him, was perhaps the most beautiful on the reservation and completed the dashing picture he made as he rode into the Agency every day.

As for Kee himself, he was one of the handsomest Navajos I ever saw, tall and lithe, with great tragic black eyes and proud, aquiline features. His rare white smile, flashing in his brown face, might have turned any girl's head. Mother and I were fascinated the first time he came to our house to find out the whereabouts of Notah and sat in the living room, completely silent, completely at ease, watching Lily as she moved composedly about dusting the furniture. He was there often after that, always remotely polite, always looking for Notah, always looking at Lily, his whole heart in his eyes.

One day after he had gone, Mother said accusingly, "Lily, that boy's in love with you!"

"Yiss," Lily answered matter-of-factly. "He iss. He iss lof me a long time."

"What!" Mother was aghast. "You mean he admits it? Does Notah know?"

"Oh, yiss." Lily raised calm eyes from her knitting. Mother was teaching her to turn a heel. "Notah and Kee haf lof

me jus' de same years." She knitted carefully past the tricky turn of the heel and then held up her sock triumphantly. "See! A goodt-a-one! Pretty quick I be a goodt socker as you!" She patted Mother's knee exuberantly.

"But about Kee," I persisted.

"Oh, yiss. Dat-a-one and Notah come here togeder. Dey come from way off." She waved a hand vaguely toward the vast reservation. "To a squaw dance dey come. Dey see me. Dey tink I am ver' beautiful." She didn't preen or even look self-conscious; she merely stated a fact. "Dey are, what you say, cousins." To a Navajo most relatives are classed loosely as brothers, and they have difficulty in making our fine distinctions.

"Well," Mother prodded, "what did you think of them?"

"I tink dey are ver' fine, ver' pretty boys. I fall in lof wid dem," Lily stated, calmly.

"With both of them?"

"Yiss. And bof of dem wid me." Lily smiled, reminiscently. "Ever'body is stop dancing and look and whisper how it will turn out."

"Well, what happened?"

Lily gave me a straight look. "I marry Notah." Then she relented. "Dey have a beeg fight. Dey fight awful. Notah feel ver' badt he must lick Kee, he iss hiss friendt, he lof heem. Notah iss sure beeg and strong!" she finished, proudly.

"But Kee still loves you?" I persisted.

"Oh, yiss. He iss never lof nobody else. Just his horse, Do-lee," she laughed, "and Notah. Kee iss never lof nobody but Do-lee and Notah and me."

"And what about you?"

"I am lof dem both. Notah iss lof Kee and me. We are not say nawthings—we are jus' all lof each oder."

"But Lily, you shouldn't be in love with two men!"

"Notah iss my hosbandt," Lily stated

simply. "Kee iss my friendt." As we came to know them better, we could see this was true. There was a deep bond of affection and trust between Notah and Kee, and their mutual love for Lily seemed to strengthen rather than impair it.

The tragedy of Lily's life was that, as the years went by, she had no child. She grieved especially for Notah since to



a Navajo childlessness is a disgrace. Too, she loved children fanatically and often had her little sister Rose with her for weeks at a time. Rose was a pear-shaped little thing, with none of Lily's beauty, but Lily was as dotingly fatuous about her as if she had been an infant prodigy. She always announced a new baby in the clan as proudly as if it were her own.

One day she came bursting in with the news that at the Mission hospital Notah's cousin Allie had given birth to a "sweet lil baby."

"But we didn't know she was married!" Mother exclaimed.

"Oh, she iss not marry," Lily smiled. "Mans don't want Allie—she iss too skinny and ogly—no, she iss not marry—dis one iss for free!"

Though both Notah and Lily had attended the Government schools and could read and write after a fashion, they clung staunchly to their tribal customs and creeds. One bitter winter day John rode past the neat stone hogan Notah had built for Lily when he brought her to the Agency as a bride. It was cold and silent, but a hundred yards farther up the canyon the pair were huddled over a camp fire with a piece of canvas stretched to the windward side. John hailed them and asked what was wrong. Notah answered, gravely, "I wass going to ask you the permission to build me a new house."

"What's the matter with the old one?"

"My nephew Bekiss wass ver' sick there and die last night," Notah explained. "Us Navajos can't stay in a place where death has visit." We had heard often of the Navajos' fear of death, or of the *chindes* (evil spirits) which caused it, and were not surprised that Notah and Lily preferred camping out to living in a *chinde* house.

Our six years in this Agency seemed marked for calamity. After measles, Lily saw us through whooping cough, countless flu epidemics, broken bones, months of illness for Mother, two sieges in the hospital for me. Then came the war, and our older son volunteered immediately. After the fall of Bataan, during the long agonizing silence as to his fate, our other son left the college he had just entered and joined the Air Force.

We had planned a final family excursion to Santa Fe, where he was to join a group en route to Kelly Field, Texas, his first training station, but the day before we were to leave, Mother fell and broke three ribs. She insisted on our going on with the plan, however, declar-

ing she would be perfectly all right with the doctor's twice daily visits and Lily's good care. I left the pantry full of food and told Lily if anything more were needed, she could get it at the Trading Post.

When we returned three days later, Mother was fine but rather worn out from Lily's ceaseless ministrations. Knowing how immaculate Mother always looked, Lily had insisted on giving her a thorough bath morning and night, besides washing her face and hands at frequent intervals throughout the day. At exactly two-hour periods all day she had prepared a tray and been deeply wounded if Mother had not eaten at least a little each time. The house was beautifully clean, but a sewing machine from the Home Economics quarters stood in the middle of the living room floor.

"Notah carry it over so I can make my squaw skirt for de Ceremonial," Lily beamed. "You can carry it back now, tank you!" Her squaw skirt, brilliant orange percale with a purple velvet blouse, lay on my neatly made bed. Lily explained, earnestly, that she had been unable to sleep on the cot I had prepared for her, as Notah got lonesome and came down, so they used our bed. But she hastened to add, "My sister, Katie, she come and sleep on de cot and go into your Mama's room ever two hour to see iss she OK, and I go ever oder two hour."

"Yes," Mother said later, "I got scarcely any sleep, they took care of me so hard!" It leaked out still later, though Mother tried loyally to keep it a secret, that not only Katie, but practically all Lily's many relatives and, naturally, Kee, had stayed at our house during those three days and evidently enjoyed to the full Lily's lavish hospitality. Not only was the pantry bare, but Mother sheepishly admitted giving Lily an extra twenty dollars and there was also a "small bill" at the Trader's.

Shortly after this Notah was drafted. For a week we saw nothing of Lily. When at last she came, she told us soberly that the Indians had been having a "Sing" for Notah. While most Indians are extremely reticent as to these sacred rites, Lily was so confident of our friendship and understanding she volunteered the details of the soldier-going-to-war ceremony.

First it was arranged with the local Medicine Man to conduct the Sing. He was paid in money by Notah, since he had a salary, though he would have accepted sheep, rugs, or Navajo jewelry. The Medicine Man arrived in the evening and sat all night in the hogan, praying



and chanting, until at daylight relatives and friends began arriving, loaded with bedding and food for three meals. After the morning meal was prepared and eaten, sacred age-old prayer songs were chanted by all the old men. When the singing ceased, a prayer basket, large and shallow and Hopi-made, was placed in the exact

center of the hogan on a new strip of cloth purchased for the occasion. The Medicine Man filled the basket with water which had been blessed for the purpose and washed Notah's head and, bit by bit, his entire body, meantime chanting incantations to insure its strengthening and protective powers.

Another meal was prepared and eaten and the afternoon spent in further sacred singing. This continued until late in the evening when they ate the remaining food and presently lay down on their blankets for the rest of the night—all but the Medicine Man, who continued to pray throughout the entire ritual. At dawn of the second day, everyone was up again to witness the concluding rites. Yellow corn pollen, Navajo symbol of life, was sprinkled on Notah's head that it might never be brought low, on his tongue that it might never speak falsely, on his eyes for clearer sight, and so on. Then he was blessed again by the Medicine Man and bidden a solemn farewell by his friends before they left. During the next four days he had to remain in or near the hogan to prevent the *chindes* from destroying the good spell.

Later, after we had seen Notah off for camp, Lily told us the remainder of the ceremony. When she received his uniform and sent his civilian clothing home, it was taken, unwashed, for it must be just as he took it off, and placed in a long box, each article in order, hat above shirt, shirt tucked into trousers, shoes beneath, with socks in them. After a sacred song the clothes were sprinkled with corn pollen and the Medicine Man asked the Great Spirit to preserve Notah, confound his enemies, and bring him back again whole to wear these garments. After four days the clothing was rolled up and put away in a bag to await his return.

Soon after the first ceremony, I went with John and Lily to take Notah to the

nearest town, twenty-five miles distant, where he would entrain for his induction center, Fort Bliss, Texas. Their parting was characteristic of the Navajos. After John and I had shaken hands with Notah and wished him Godspeed, he and Lily formally pressed limp hands together. He said a husky, "Yah-e-teh," which has as many meanings in Navajo as "Aloha" in Hawaiian. She merely cast down her eyes and turned away.

I felt a slight uneasiness that Notah must leave for the Army before Kee. They were scheduled to go at the same time but Do-Lee stepped into a chuck hole while galloping at full speed and threw Kee off, fracturing his arm and thus delaying his departure for more than a month. But Notah had no unworthy doubts. "A good thing Kee have to stay in the hospital," he laughed. "Achinebah, she won't miss me so much."

Lily was devoted to Kee, in a sisterly way, while he was an invalid. After a meal she would say, "I take dis extra piece of cake to Kee, OK?" Or perhaps it was a dish of ice cream or fruit. Her second pair of socks she knit somewhat smaller, for him. But eventually his arm healed and the Army got him. It seemed like trapping some wild, free creature of the air to separate Kee from his horse and put him into a training camp.

Lily was at our house when he came to tell her good-bye. Mother and I left them alone, but we might as well have stayed; they had nothing to say. From our kitchen we could not help seeing and hearing all that went on. Kee just sat looking at her with such a naked expression of hurt and hunger in his eyes that Lily evidently couldn't meet it, but sat with her own eyes downcast, silently knitting. In the kitchen, Mother, who had been so scandalized at the triangle, whispered crossly, "I wish to goodness she'd break down and kiss him good-bye!"

"But, Mother," I whispered back, "she didn't even kiss Notah good-bye!"

"Well, it's not natural," Mother muttered. "Someone should do something!"

Kee chose that instant to go. He stood up hesitantly, fumbling his hat, was silent for a moment longer, and finally muttered a halting, "I go, now." He walked out without another word. Lily remained for a moment with bowed head; then, going to the door, she gazed after the solitary figure riding slowly down the Agency street.

"Now, he must tell goodt-bye to Dolee," she murmured. It was like a requiem.

Lily was lonely after Notah and Kee left and spent a great deal of her time on the reservation with her family. When she was in the Agency, she spent a lot of it with us. One day she announced she had a job at the Club, a co-operative rooming and boarding house for teachers, nurses, and other Government employees. "How nice!" we chimed. Lily had lived so long at the Agency she was not happy on the reservation any more, and we thought this would be just the thing for her while Notah was away.

"But I am not go to take it," she said.

"Why not?"

"Well, I don't min' work, but dis Matron say I mus' cut my hair and wear English close."

What heresy! Lily in short, awkward "English" clothes, with her lovely long hair unbecomingly bobbed! Yet, swishing her leisurely way between tables in all those long, full petticoats, she might have been just a little too quaint.

"I tell her," Lily continued, "I work for you—I work goodt in squaw skirts."

"What did she say?"

"She say dat your hard luck." Lily's full lips pouted. "You know what? I don' like dat woman. She get onto my goat!"

Later she was offered a job at the school laundry where she could wear her tribal costume in peace. She shared a room with another Navajo girl, and we saw her less often. Occasionally she received a stiff little letter from Notah and would bring it for us to read. Her happiness at getting these stilted notes was touching, and it was plain that she saw through Notah's difficult English his own loneliness and longing.

After six years, John's work at this Agency was completed and we moved back to our former station. Of the six of us who came, only John and Kay and I were returning, though the son now flying over European battlefields would eventually be at home again. And of the tears for those tragic years, not a few were shed at leaving Lily, who had helped see us through them.

John and I saw her once, nearly a year later, when business took us back to the border town near the old Agency. She looked sad and older, but at sight of us her happiness transformed her into almost the old Lily again. She told us that Notah was fighting in Europe and she had not seen him for "a too-long time." But when I asked her about Kee, her eyes took on that clouded look an Indian assumes when he does not intend to talk.

"He iss gone again," she said, briefly.

"Oh, did he have a furlough?"

"Yiss." Then, evidently changing her mind about talking, she raised her eyes and looking straight into mine said with deep significance, "Kee will not come back. Not never. De Shaps will kill him."

"Why, Lily, where's your faith?" I cried.

"Listen." Lily moved closer and spoke in an undertone, for my ears alone. "He iss not have no Sing, no nothing—you know dat? He iss always know de Shaps will kill him." She was silent for a mo-

ment, that inscrutable expression on her face, and then resumed. "It iss goodt he get a furlough. He say he have to come back once more to see Do-lee—and me. He give Do-lee to me for Notah when he come."

"But, Notah—" I faltered.

"Notah will come back," she said with as much assurance as she had stated that Kee would never return.

A few months after V-E Day, I heard a knock and, stepping to the door, was confronted by Lily and Notah's beaming faces. I was incredibly glad to see them. Notah had arrived from Europe only the week before and had decided at once to come and see John, he said. He hired an Indian boy with a car to bring himself, Lily, and Lily's brother Sam the hundred miles from the old Agency. The two young men were smiling diffidently behind them in the doorway.

I knew Sam well, of course, and, when the formalities were over, for Navajos are great sticklers for ceremony, he launched into tall tales of his exploits in the Pacific theater of war. While they waited for John to come, I prepared a hot meal and, Sam having run down, Notah and Lily brought me up to date on the news of all the Navajos we had known and liked so well. All but Kee. I felt diffident about asking news of him since Lily's tragic prophecy, and they volunteered none.

Lily and Notah were touchingly happy at being together again and Lily said, over and over, "Two year, more dan two year I not see him never, till las' week!" And Notah murmured, with fond eyes on her pretty face, "Two years is sure one heck of a long time!"

When they rose from the table, Lily gave Notah some signal with her eyes. Grinning broadly, he went out to the car. In a few minutes he returned with a large

fat baby in his arms, evidently just awakened and smiling good-naturedly.

"Lily!" I gasped. "You have a baby!"

"Yiss!" Lily giggled, while Notah stood, smiling fatuously. "I surprise you, huh? He iss eight mont' old today!"

I held out my arms to the baby and he came willingly. He was clearly used to petting. Notah, with the unmistakable air of the proud father, went to the other end of the room and sat down by the boys.

"But Lily," I stammered, when the truth sank in. "Did you adopt him?"

"No!" Lily seized the baby and held him up by her face. "He iss my very own! I have him! See, he look jus' like me!"

Sure enough, the round, smooth face and large, almond-shaped eyes were a small replica of Lily's own. Then, eyes dancing, her whole face radiant, she leaned nearer, confidentially. "I have him for Notah, see? A beeg surprise when he come from de war. A fine t'ing to find he iss a papa when he come home all tire out! I t'ink so, how about you?"

While I hesitated for words she whispered, with meaning, "Kee iss dead! You know dat?" She stopped my exclamation with a pressure on my arm.

"It iss goodt. It must be dat way. But he will always be wid Notah and me. We will all lof each oder."

She cuddled the baby and he dimpled into laughter. Then she sobered again and said, slowly, "Your Mama—I wish she know we have dis beautiful baby. Maybe Kee tell her—what you t'ink?"

Estelle Webb Thomas has written many stories about Indian and Mexican children for young people. An earlier article, "America's First Families on the Warpath," appeared in the Summer 1942 CG.

Bernadine Custer is the illustrator.

EVEN MONEY ON JOHN CHAVIS

ARNA BONTEMPS

READERS of The Raleigh Register in North Carolina found the following notice in the issue of August 26, 1808:

"John Chavis takes this method of informing his employers, and the citizens of Raleigh in general, that the present quarter of his school will end the 15th of September, and the next will commence on the 19th. He will, at the same time, open an evening school for the purpose of instructing children of colour, as he intends, for the accommodation of some of his employers, to exclude all children of colour from his day school.

"The evening school will commence at an hour by sun. When the white children leave the house, those of colour will take their places and continue until ten o'clock.

"The terms of teaching white children will be as usual, two and a half dollars per quarter; those of colour, one dollar and three quarters. In both cases, the whole of the money is to be paid in advance to Mr. Benjamin S. King. Those who produce certificates from him of their having paid the money, will be admitted.

"Those who think proper to put their children under his care, may rely upon the strictest attention being paid, not only to their education but to their morals, which he deems an important part of education.

"He hopes to have a better school house by the commencement of the next quarter."

The extraordinary thing about the announcement is not that white and colored

children were being taught in the same house by the same instructor though this was unusual enough. Nor was it that at the beginning of the 19th century a school was already maintained in Raleigh for the instruction of free Negro youth. Its exceptional feature, in the light of local custom and subsequent history, is that John Chavis, the schoolmaster, whose pupils included children of wealthy and prominent people, whose school was called by a leading North Carolina educator "*The best at that time to be found in the State,*" was himself a black man of un-mixed Negro ancestry. And the white pupils themselves were destined, in a surprising number of cases, to bring honor to their round-faced, snowy-haired old master by becoming conspicuous as men of wealth and influence and as leaders in political and professional life of the next generation.

Chief Justice Archibald Henderson, for example, sent his sons to Chavis' school. Another pupil was Willie Person Mangum, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1840 to 1853 and who, somewhat earlier, had received the electoral vote of South Carolina for president. At the Whig Convention of 1839 Mangum was offered the nomination for vice-president but refused it. However, as president pro tempore of the Senate from May 31, 1842 to March 4, 1845, Mangum was actually acting vice-president of the United States. Charles Manly, another former pupil of the Negro educator, was elected governor of North Carolina in 1848. Other pupils of the

"courtly," black-clad schoolmaster included physicians, ministers, and teachers, as well as other lawyers and politicians as distinguished as those already mentioned.

Chavis called them all his "sons." In his correspondence with Willie Person Mangum, with whom he remained on the closest personal terms to the end of his life, the former teacher's attitude was always fatherly. Sometimes he entreated. At others he did not hesitate to criticize and scold. If Mrs. Mangum "will condescend to board out Sally and send her to a man of my stamp," he wrote her husband in July of 1832, "I can have her boarded at an excellent house. . . . I desire to teach her the Theory of the English Language which she never will be taught unless I teach her, because no other person in this part of the country teaches it but myself, and my manner I deem far preferable to the English Grammar. I wish you to make this statement to Colonel Horner [James H. Horner, founder of the Horner School in Oxford, one of the oldest high schools in North Carolina] and tell him that I want his daughter Juliana for the same purpose. . . ." A few months earlier he had written his friend, "I see, my son Priestly (brother of Senator Mangum and also a former pupil of Chavis') as I expected is not elected. Yes and you may tell him for me, that unless he lay aside that stubborn unyielding disposition of his and become condescending and familiar he will never set the River on fire, neither for himself or his children." In the same year he sent greetings to another "son," former pupil Abram Rencher, later to become minister to Portugal and governor of New Mexico. But on another occasion, in the same period, he lost all patience with his favorite disciple. "You know," he wrote to Mangum in September of 1831, "that you have been for some time hopping and shifting about, showing your coat, to be sometimes Federalism, some-

times Democracy, sometimes Republicanism. Now you know that won't do. . . ."

The husband of Mangum's granddaughter, commenting a little uneasily on this correspondence and the naturalness of the friendship it reflected, did not hesitate to observe that "the letters of Chavis which have come down to us indicate no social inequality" between the two men.

How other grandchildren and great-grandchildren of these prominent tarheels have looked upon this pattern of racial relations, involving as it did so many of their forbears, cannot be clearly documented. It is a fact, nevertheless, that in the first quarter of the last century Chavis prepared a number of the University of North Carolina's most honored alumni for college entrance. At the same time he was a regularly licensed Presbyterian minister and frequently occupied pulpits before white congregations in Granville, Wake, and Orange Counties. Of his delivery and general effectiveness on these occasions George Wortham, a prominent lawyer of Oxford, whose childhood memories of Chavis remained vivid after fifty years, wrote in a letter in 1883: ". . . His English was remarkably pure, contained no 'negroisms;' his manner was impressive, his explanations clear and concise, and his views, as I then thought and still think, entirely orthodox . . . his sermons abounding in strong common sense views and happy illustrations without any effort at oratory or any sensational appeals to the passions of his hearers. He had certainly read God's Word much and meditated deeply on it. He had a small but select library of theological works, in which were to be found the works of Flavel, Buxton, Boston, and others. . . ."

Even in 1887 when customs of segregation were assuming some of the more rigid features of their contemporary pattern, the first volume of the publications

of the U.S. Bureau of Education devoted three pages to the unique career of John Chavis, introducing it with the following statement: "One of the most remarkable characters in the educational history of North Carolina was a negro. His life finds no parallel in the South, nor, so far as the writer is aware, in any part of our country. To one who is familiar with the status of the negro in the slaveholding States in the first half of this century, the following will read stranger than fiction, but of its truth there can be no question."

Chavis himself, however, gave no hint that he was aware of anything different, special, or unnatural about his work or his status in the community. One gathers from his letters that he was more concerned with the ability of his students to learn than with their color, more concerned with their dispositions than with their status. If this attitude has a flavor of nonchalance, all things considered, perhaps there was a reason. Chavis didn't have to create drama. Drama had created him.

While the place and date of Chavis' birth are obscure and his own reference to himself as a soldier of the American Revolution is vague, history picked up the thread of this black boy's life at a fairly early age. An order of the quarterly court session for Rockbridge County, Virginia, issued the following on April 6, 1802: "On the motion of Rev. John Chavis, a black man, it is ordered that the clerk of this court certify that the said Chavis has been known to the court for several years last past and that he has always, since known to the court, been considered as a freeman and they believe him to be such, and that he has always while in this county conducted himself in a decent orderly and respectable manner, and also that he has been a student at Washington Academy [now Washington and Lee Uni-

versity] where they believe he went through a regular course of Academical Studies."

Nearly three years earlier, in connection with a meeting held October 15-19, 1799, the records of the Presbytery of Lexington, Virginia, had included this entry: "John Chavis, a black man, personally known to most members of Pres. & of unquestionably good fame, & a communicant in the Presn. church, was introduced and conversed with relative to his practical acquaintance with living religion & his call to preach the ever lasting Gospel, Pres. considering that, they like their Heavenly Father, should be no respecter of persons, being satisfied with his narrative, agreed, notwithstanding his colour, to take him under their care, for further trials in the usual form. Accordingly, an Exegesis in latin on the theme 'In quo consistat salvatio ab peccato,' and a Homily on the decree of Election, were appointed him as pieces of trial against our next meeting. . . ."

But the account of John Chavis' youth, as pieced together by those who knew him best, begins with a more secular episode: a cracker-barrel argument in Oxford, North Carolina, and a bet between friends—a "wager that a Negro could not be educated." The parties to this contention, it is said, agreed on young Chavis as the boy to prove their case. Perhaps one reason for his selection was that he was a full Negro with no other strain to complicate the issue. Another was stated as his good name in the community.

Precisely what conditions were proposed for this test of prevailing attitudes can only be guessed. Between men of honor it would probably have been unsporting to have recorded them, but one report is that arrangements for Chavis' education were made by a local minister, himself a recent graduate of Princeton. The court order of Rockbridge County seems clear

enough on Chavis' attendance at Washington and Lee; and his subsequent attendance at Princeton, during the administration of Dr. John Witherspoon, has been properly attested. He is now listed among Princeton's undergraduates—sometime prior to 1794. But more detailed information about his college days is wanting as a result of the casual way of keeping college records in those days.

Also lost to history is the settlement of the wager that started this unusual American odyssey. But Chavis' ministry under the Synod of Virginia and later under the General Assembly (see reports of the Philadelphia meetings of 1800 and 1801) of the Presbyterian Church can be followed in detail from the date of his first appointment to the time, just prior to his death in 1838, when he was given a pension by the churches as a "superannuated licentiate."

After the insurrection of slaves in Virginia in 1831, under the leadership of a plantation preacher and "prophet" named Nat Turner, legislation was passed in North Carolina forbidding Negroes to preach; and from that time onward Chavis found himself confronted by increasing difficulties. A note of discouragement and frustration began to creep into his letters to Mangum, his long-time friend, the future senator. He even began to be plagued by the racial issue. No one could accuse him of working for abolition of slavery, he pointed out, but he had to defend himself of charges that he was engaged in a sort of conspiracy to further the education of free people of color.

While his friends remained loyal and no adverse criticism by his contemporaries, personal or otherwise, is to be found in accounts that have survived, Chavis' own

letters to Mangum make it plain that a weight had fallen on his spirit. A year or two before his death, while still conducting his school, he spoke of going elsewhere. But by then Chavis had become one of those who talk of leaving but never get away.

He remained in North Carolina, the probable state of his birth, to the end. Moreover, except by his own actions and example, he made no loud protest against the social or political environment of his state. Curiously, instead of being offended by this course, whites by the former and Negroes by the latter, North Carolinians have generally approved of John Chavis. A housing project and a recreation park in Raleigh have been named for him, and in 1938 the North Carolina Historical Commission worded the following inscription for a marker near the park:

JOHN CHAVIS

Early 19th Century Free Negro preacher and teacher of both races in North Carolina. Memorial Park 200 yards east.

Arna Bontemps is the author of Story of the Negro, We Have Tomorrow, Black Thunder, and other books for young readers and adults. He has just completed Chariot in the Sky, a teen-age historical novel for Winston's Land of the Free series. An anthology, The Poetry of the Negro, of which he is co-editor with Langston Hughes, appeared earlier this year. Mr. Bontemps is now working on a three-way biography of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. DuBois, with the assistance of a Guggenheim Fellowship. He is on leave from Fisk University, where he is chief librarian.

LETTERS TO ITALY—A RECONSIDERATION

RICHARD ROBBINS

It is now over a year since 27,000,000 Italian men and women trooped to the polls in their country's first postwar national election and rolled up a decisive two-to-one victory over communism in the shape of Signor Togliatti's Popular Front. It was a moment of high drama in the troubled history of the cold war. Indeed, our own Senator Vandenberg referred extravagantly to April 18, 1948, as "the most important election in the next 100 years." And thousands of Americans of Italian ancestry, apparently sharing the Senator's concern, unloaded a barrage of letters onto their relatives and friends in the old country imploring them to reject communism and to vote for the Christian-Democrats or some other anti-Communist party. Thus there came into being the famous "Letters to Italy" campaign, which, whatever its impact on the election itself, merits attention as the response of one of America's largest groups to an international issue of great emotional intensity.

In its Autumn issue of last year *COMMON GROUND* printed an article by Sylvan Gotshal and Halsey Munson describing and analyzing the "Letters to Italy" movement. With all due respect for the authors, I wish to take exception to their conclusions. I say conclusions, because on the level of fact their description squares completely with what actually occurred. From the beginning of March up to mid-April over a million extra letters *did* pass through the New York Post Office destined for Italy. Many of these were per-

sonal expressions; many others were either prompted by communication agencies—newspapers, social clubs, radio stations—or were simply form letters requiring only the signature of Mr. Average Italian American to be complete. As the writers pointed out, a number of diverse personalities and organizations had a hand in the process—the Mayor of Toledo, one of the first to take up the idea; Drew Pearson, who helped sell it; radio station *WRUL*, which kept the international airwaves humming with personal "stop communism" messages; *Il Progresso*, the country's largest Italian-language paper, and the New York World Telegram, which helped with front-page hints on what to say to your Italian cousin. On the factual level, then, no issue arises. Having studied the letters campaign over a three-month period in 1948, I can testify to the essential accuracy of the account contained in *COMMON GROUND*.

Let us turn to conclusions. Presumably the authors asked themselves why the campaign evoked such a widespread response. They sought the explanation in a spontaneous welling-up of the democratic spirit among Italian Americans, which compelled them to write to Italians abroad of the very real advantages which America offers. Here, we read, "was essentially a plea for democracy from one person to another, from one member of a family to another member, from friend to friend." Later, there are allusions to a "spontaneous uprising among Italian Americans," and the campaign is gauged

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as successful “because it came from the heart.” One gets the impression that in a thousand homes in scores of cities, men and women simultaneously decided they would write to their Italian cousins warning them of the Communist menace. As easy as that.

II

Such a view of the “Letters to Italy” campaign is over-simplified and unrealistic. To see it in more accurate perspective one must examine three major elements that went into the situation. *First*, powerful world forces, in particular the Marshall Plan, the Catholic Church, and the Communists, were the actual determinants of the election, to the extent that the result would have been much the same, letters or no letters. To couple the letters program with these forces would be like starring Rosenkranz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet*. *Second*, while there is no denying the rain of letters which descended on Italian communities, they did not originate spontaneously in the American family kitchen. Rather, the letters campaign, by and large, was merely one more organized effort in the general anti-Communist excitement in the United States. If Italian Americans felt uneasy about the specter of communism hovering above Italy, so for that matter did most Americans from Harry S. Truman down. What I am saying is that the letters program hardly could spring genuinely from the bottom up because it was largely organized from the top down, and that the letters program hardly could give the Italians a true picture of life in America because it concentrated on sounding the alarm over the “Red menace.” And this is not to slur over the brutality of the Soviet regime. *Third*, the thousands of Italian Americans who responded to the appeal were less interested in the Italian political situation *per se* than they were

in achieving status and integration in the American community, partially denied them through prejudice and discrimination. What better demonstration of that desire than to join the anti-Communist crusade at a time when anti-communism was the supreme test of loyalty! In other words, the “Letters to Italy” drive may be seen as an unfortunate diversion of energy from the real Italian American problem—how to break down anti-Italian prejudice in the United States. Condemning communism—whether at home or abroad—is unfortunately no passport for winning complete acceptance in the American community.

The critique against the “Letters to Italy” campaign, then, comes down to this: it wasn’t vital in tipping the electoral balance; far from being a new and exciting grass-roots idea, it wound up merely as one more example of packaged anti-communism; and, finally, it made no significant dent on the primary problem of solving group conflicts in the United States. It now remains, as Al Smith said, to take a look at the record.

With respect to the first point, we may say bluntly that American economic aid to Italy saved the election for our side. By April the United States had sent over \$1,000,000,000 in grants and loans, with the promise of \$736,000,000 more during the first year of the Marshall Plan. And the Italian leaders made it perfectly clear as to where the grain and coal was coming from. Even the Communists argued in ludicrous fashion that economic assistance would go on despite a Communist victory; America was an “imperialist monster,” but she could not part with the Italian market. A month before the election, however, Secretary Marshall put an end to the farce by declaring that should the Popular Front triumph “this government would have to conclude that Italy had removed itself from the benefits of

the European Recovery Program." Our Ambassador to Italy, James Dunn, underlined what had been said by being on hand to welcome the 400th, the 500th, the 600th ship bearing goods from the United States. Without mentioning the election specifically, he nonetheless suggested that additional aid hung on a Communist defeat. What we did, in effect, was to load the election dice by going beyond our traditional policy of a free ballot, freely cast. In a series of studied moves—the Marshall statement, the sudden transfer of merchant ships to Italy, the abrupt return of Trieste to the Italians, the Ambassador Dunn speeches—in all these, the United States sought to guarantee the election results before the election. The viciousness of the propaganda spewed out by the Communists cannot obscure our own heavy pressure on the Italian government. And this factor utterly transcended in importance the "Letters to Italy" drive.

We must emphasize too the role of the Catholic Church in reinforcing the Christian Democrat position. To stress this temporal activity is by no means an expression of "anti-Catholicism." Quite the contrary, for it is a sign of mature liberalism to make the distinction between religion and clerical power in politics. For example, many Catholic Basques made precisely that distinction when they fought on the Loyalist side during the Spanish Civil War. The Church's intervention in Italy may be explained as follows: First, communism as the Church saw it had become not only a political but a moral challenge. You could no longer make that neat separation between the things of Caesar and God. Second, the gravity of the situation warranted the abrogation of the constitutional provision enjoining the Church from active political operations.

The Pope spoke first with a broad

spiritual emphasis. "Now it is evident that the voice of one's conscience urges every sincere Catholic to give his vote to those candidates on electoral lists that offer truly efficient guarantees for the safeguarding of God's rights and souls." Then, at the level of town and village, the Church mobilized 125,000 clergymen, with a program aimed particularly at the new women voters. Catholic Action—a secular arm of the Church—organized "cells" in most of Italy's 24,000 parishes, linking together a membership of perhaps 3,000,000. Cardinal Schuster of Milan warned his diocese that absolution would be refused to those who "officially accept the errors contained in the ideology of these (Communist) parties, and when, after having been warned, they continue to lend their co-operation even if only physical, especially by voting." The Archbishops of southern Italy tempered their plea to combat communism with a manifesto condemning the abuse of the property principle, thus hoping to counter the Communists' fantastic, but effective, promises of land distribution. Unquestionably, the Church played a decisive role.

For its part, the Communist Party proselytized with no less zeal. As the largest Communist unit in Western Europe it received funds and newsprint from the Soviet Union. It possessed a skilled leader in Togliatti, controlled a militant labor movement and a vocal press, marshalled an army of ex-partisans. Above all, the Communists wore the red shirt with an Italian style, promising land to the peasants (but not collectivization), invoking the national hero Garibaldi, playing upon an undercurrent of resentment of Italy's dependency on the United States. They regarded the election as a method for vaulting into the seat of absolute power. Yet the anti-Communist forces, Italian and American, hardly had

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clean hands themselves. They were in the difficult position of saying, in effect, let the rule of the majority decide the issue so long as it does not turn out to be a Communist majority.

These forces, then, were the major instruments shaping the election results. American foreign policy, the Church, the Communists—they decided the issue; and it is my guess that the "Letters to Italy" campaign touched only the edges of the election struggle. (Doxa, the Italian public-opinion organization, would support this view, but one hesitates to employ such evidence after the fiasco of last November.)

But even granted the letters materially altered the situation in Italy and were an effective device against the Communists, criticism of the campaign would still be justified in terms of the way it was organized in the United States. As the campaign progressed, it drifted more and more out of the hands of the letter writers and into the hands of the high-powered organizers. In the process, the genuine letters describing life in America as seen through Italian American eyes were overshadowed by stereotyped anti-Communist slogans, to say nothing of direct exhortations as to how the citizen of Italy should mark his ballot.

When the campaign was first germinating in Toledo, Ohio, the artificial qualities were not so dominant. Mayor Mike DeSalle, who was one of the initiators of the program, had a simpler, more direct, idea than anti-communism: the immigrant American would tell how he was faring in America and what opportunities were open to him here. At that stage an element of spontaneity may have been present. But it was soon vitiated by the public orators, the public relations experts, the drum-beaters for press and radio. Toledo, for example, summoned Joe Martin, Speaker of the House, to a

climactic mass meeting where he lost no time in dramatizing the issue along the lines I have suggested: "If all the people in the United States of foreign birth or extraction will start movements in each group to write letters to their friends and relatives in the homelands telling how much better freedom and Americanism are than despotism . . . we can win the cold war . . . millions of lives can be saved . . . rivers of blood can be prevented . . . if we go at it with the earnestness and intensity with which we go to battle."

Even before this fervid oratory, the Mayor had confided the idea to Drew Pearson, the political columnist composed of one part Quaker humanism, one part gossipy inside stories, one part omnipotent "predictions of things to come." Thereafter, with Pearson and others huckstering the campaign, "Letters to Italy" reached an enormous newspaper and radio audience. The notion of "pushing" people into writing letters was on the way, and city after city took on the organizational pattern. The editor of a Milwaukee Italian-language paper supplied free postage for those who would sign this blunt form: "If the forces of true democracy should lose in the Italian election, the American government will not send any more money to you, our relatives." (!) Priests in Utica, New York, distributed 8,000 prepared letters prophesying the ruin of Italy in the event of Communist victory. Various organizations in Brooklyn distributed 250,000 copies of a form letter similar in tone. To be sure, many letters were written without such prompting. Yet the amount of canned material used is disturbing, to say the least. And the expanded "Voice of America" broadcasts, the barrage of words beamed out by stations WRUL and WOV, the guides to letter-writing printed in the Italian-language press—these also contributed to swamping the original note

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of sincerity in the "Letters to Italy" campaign.

To understand the intensity with which the Italian-language newspapers pursued the election issue, we must inquire briefly into their recent history. During the thirties a majority of the papers were pro-Fascist, though the Italian American editors in many cases were simply taking their cue from numerous highly placed Americans who mistook the tinsel of Mussolini's regime for the substance within. Whether these editors really believed in a new order or were merely suffering from political myopia, the fact remains they did convert the "incident" of 1935 into an act of aggression perpetrated by Ethiopia on Italy! They did whitewash the Fascist totalitarianism, which was as total then as the Communist version is today. If Pearl Harbor induced a change in this attitude, it did not blot out the memory of that earlier tolerance of fascism.

These coals have to be raked over not so much as a demonstration of the easy wisdom of hindsight, but in the interest of making a point germane to the "Letters to Italy" campaign. Italian American editors and leaders must have felt in 1948 that a high-powered drive against communism might atone for the errors of 1935-39 committed by the numerous pro-Fascist papers. Whatever the uneasy relationship with Mussolini in the prewar days, there need be none with respect to Stalin. This desire to expiate their pro-Mussolini stand, explains, I think, a good deal of the inflamed prose appearing in the bulk of the Italian American press prior to the election, phrases like "give the coup de grâce to the monster which threatens us," or "if you let this scheme go through . . . you . . . prepare the greatest infamy in history." (It is necessary, however, to exempt from this generalization a sprinkling of anti-Fascist newspapers and political leaders whose policies

and beliefs have been consistently anti-totalitarian.)

The organized effort of the press was complemented by the work of the Church, Italian American veterans' organizations, labor unions, and professional groups. All this, I submit, was very far from the original intent of the letter-writing campaign. A host of other examples could be assembled to indicate the lack of spontaneity and the overindulgence in the "Red menace" during the later stages of the "Letters to Italy" drive.

Still, it remains incontestable that the appeal called out a widespread response, and anyone who takes a critical view of the entire operation is obligated to account for the campaign's success. It could scarcely have been due to an awakened interest in the threat of a new despotism in Italy, for no such ferment had arisen prior to the war when a regime existed with as little concern for freedom as Moscow has today. Some Italian Americans feared for relatives in Italy, some feared for the Pope and their religion, yet the conviction arises that these were not the dominant themes in the large-scale response. Rather, the clue probably lies in the impact of communism on America in a time of extreme international stress. Americans of all backgrounds felt very strongly about communism in 1948, and Italian Americans were no exception. The only difference was that in April 1948 Italian Americans were requested to put it in writing, a request which they promptly fulfilled, partly as an act of faith, partly as a means of telling the American community they deserved a full place in the social picture. That is why so many of the letters were paraphrases of the Bill of Rights: "Through the freedom of assembly any person is at liberty to address any group on the streets of this country." "Americans have no fear that someone is peering into their win-

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dows . . . to report their words and activities to secret police." And so on.

All of which returns us to the third point of this critique, that the "Letters to Italy" campaign diverted our Italian American population from a problem nearer home. Italian American loyalty and vigorous anti-communism may be taken for granted. Why carry out an elaborate high-pressure campaign to exploit the obvious? More important, once the election excitement had died down, once the torrent of words had ceased, Italian Americans regarded the issue as finished. After all, the Communists had been beaten, Italy was safe. So the "Letters to Italy" campaign may actually have caused a *falling-off* in the amount of friendly contact between the peoples of the two countries, because it focused the entire process on a one-day contest. The contest over, everyone went back to the business of getting on in America. That was the inevitable result of cramming the "Letters to Italy" idea into a feverish two months of activity. A fast build-up equals a rapid let-down.

Moreover, as I pointed out in an earlier paragraph, the campaign obscured during those two months a much more fundamental problem facing Italian Americans, adjustment here in the United States. That includes combatting the considerable prejudice which still is practised against Italians. It includes resolving the tensions still present between parents born in Italy and their children and grandchildren born here. And it includes a host of other problems which can be glimpsed in any current work on Italian Americans—Irvn Child's book, *Italian or American*, to cite one example. Such movements as "Letters to Italy" contribute little or nothing at all to this primary task, so long as they concentrate so heavily on the politics of overseas countries.

True, contemporary Soviet aggression is as much the concern of Italian Americans as it is of any other group. But writing letters to remote relatives in the old country seems a superficial way to encourage the group's interest in foreign affairs.

As for the people in Italy who received the letters, we do not have sufficient data to say with any finality that their reaction was thoroughly positive or negative. Don Sturzo, one of the abler students of Italian politics wrote, "Such letters struck home in Southern Italian and Sicilian villages with the force of lightning," and observers returning from Italy after the election tended to confirm his view. On the other hand, there are reports that considerable numbers in the Italian middle class were distressed and perplexed by the whole business. How could the United States square its condemnation of Soviet election-rigging techniques with the fact that its own citizens were telling Italians to mark their ballots in just one way? What would we have thought if a flood of letters reached Italian Americans in this country just before last November's election warning them about the capitalist menace and urging them to vote against Governor Dewey?

In sum, then, campaigns of the type of "Letters to Italy" are far from supplying a means to draw our immigrant groups and Europeans closer together in a common front against Soviet ideology. The impact of letters on the old country is likely to be small in comparison with more fundamental forces. Further, on this side of the ocean the values which might be realized through genuine letters are likely to be sacrificed to a highly organized drive along advertising-copy lines. The letters thereby tend to emerge as political tracts instead of descriptions of group life in America.

III

Do the more questionable aspects of the "Letters to Italy" drive imply that our immigrant groups should be discouraged from discussing with friends and relatives abroad the advantages and freedoms offered by America as contrasted with the claims of the Soviet Union? Not necessarily, for our various nationality and racial groups have good reason to take pride in the opportunities they enjoy here, just as they have reason to wax indignant over the discrimination which still serves as a barrier to many of their aspirations. Certainly spokesmen for the Soviet Union have never been reticent about its abolition of racial inequalities. Indeed, the Soviet Union has consistently exploited its treatment of minorities as compared with ours.

If we do urge millions of Americans to write their kin overseas, we ought to refrain from directing their thinking into specific political channels remote from their experience. And we ought to remember that Europeans are well aware of their political crises and would prefer to hear about *America* from Americans. As the recent survey conducted by the Common Council for American Unity showed, Europeans have a healthy curiosity about this country together with a number of warped impressions, Hollywood and Moscow inspired, of what life is like here. That curiosity has a long history, and volumes about the United States have been written by foreign travelers; but Crèvecoeur's famous question—what then is the American?—is still being asked across the European continent. Perhaps letters can help supply the answer, can supply a personalized down-to-earth picture of what goes on in our cities and on our farms.

In any future letter-writing campaigns

let us encourage the groups which take part to describe what they know best—life in these United States, its variety, its achievements, the difficulties that remain. Not only is that a more genuine approach, it makes better propaganda. For we are thereby showing Europeans that our multi-group society functions successfully, and we are supplying that valuable lesson without condescending lectures delivered in a high moral tone ("Try to do your share for the cause of democracy in the world, and tell all your friends that the real friend of Italy is America and not Russia. How can people believe that the Communists are disinterested?"—from a letter sent during the campaign). And when you come right down to it, the purpose of letter-writing in the first place is to describe and ask questions, not to orate.

Perhaps those active in organizing the "Letters to Italy" campaign would answer in this wise: "The kind of letters you suggest would be fine ordinarily. They would contrast neatly with the restrictions in force behind the Iron Curtain since our people would be exercising the freedom to write an uncensored, non-directed letter on any topic they chose. But this cold war is a decisive struggle and it is later than you think. Every country must be on one side or the other. So if our people who still have roots in the old country can be used to help tip the political balance our way, they should be so used."

Well, if we reach that kind of impasse in international affairs, then a flurry of letters dispatched abroad can't alter the situation. Industrial and military power will count then, not words. On the other hand, if room still exists for persuasion on a person-to-person basis, the letter from the American to the European that describes, that tells a story, seems to me

LETTERS TO ITALY—A RECONSIDERATION

the least offensive and the most effective kind of propaganda for a democracy.

Richard Robbins teaches sociology at the University of Illinois. He recently completed a study of the propaganda influences surrounding the Italian election of April 1948.

Few articles published in COMMON GROUND have prompted as many comments as "Letters to Italy" in our Autumn 1948 issue. Mr. Robbins' rejoinder takes a different view of that campaign. COMMON GROUND is glad to present this viewpoint, although it disagrees with many of the points Mr. Robbins attempts to make. If Italian Americans were responding to the anti-Communist feeling common to most Americans, they cannot be fairly charged with trying primarily to achieve recognition, to expiate prewar pro-Fascist sentiments, or with acting solely under organized pressure. The effectiveness of the letters did not depend on their "spontaneity," but on their genuineness. How did letter-writing divert Italian Americans from fighting discrimination? How could the millions of extra letters have lessened contacts between the peoples of the two countries?

What influence the letters actually had in Italy is another question. COMMON GROUND has tried to get a comprehensive and objective story of their reception and

effect but so far without success. The still broader question of whether the government or people of one country have a right to try to influence the elections of another country is not discussed in this article. Mr. Robbins and many of those commenting on the original article assume the answer is no. The Common Council does not believe there is any such simple answer. Where worldwide issues are involved and effective international organization is at stake, one country obviously has a concern in the elections of another. What it can legitimately, and wisely, do to try to influence the outcome of such elections, without in any way interfering with a free ballot and the country's independence, is a question deserving fullest study and discussion. Letters, however, written by the citizens of one country to relatives and friends in another country, discussing election issues and even urging such relatives and friends to vote in a certain way, do not, the Council believes, trespass on the freedom of choice and expression that we want to see preserved for all peoples. The Council agrees with Mr. Robbins, however, that letters which tell about everyday life in the United States, our achievements and problems, the workings and shortcomings of democracy, are likely to be more effective in building goodwill and spreading the democratic idea.

PART-TIME AMERICANS

MIKHAIL JELEZNOV

EVERY RUSSIAN who came to America acquired almost immediately a dual personality. The change from our old life in the Old Country to a new life in the New World did not affect us fundamentally. We remained Russians, one hundred per cent Russians, with the only difference that here we were Russians in our spare time.

We had to work, of course, to support ourselves and our families, and that made it inevitable for us to spend a good part of our time in the company of Americans. It was a tortuous and unpleasant necessity, and we usually shook off the association after working hours. There was very little we could do at the beginning to earn a livelihood, but whatever a person's work was it did not in any way affect his social position in the Russian colony. It was a sort of inverted democracy. A former general could have become a taxi driver; a former professor, a night watchman; a former writer, a housepainter; a former actress, a charwoman. To us, however, they remained what they had been before the Revolution. The taxi driver was a general; the night watchman, a professor; the housepainter, a writer; and the charwoman, an actress. And if a former petty government official succeeded in getting a position with the State Department as a consultant on Russian affairs, he still remained in our eyes a petty government official of no great importance, who, if anything, had to be pitied; poor fellow, he seemed to be pretty bright and intelligent

but had no future—his career had been abruptly terminated by the Revolution!

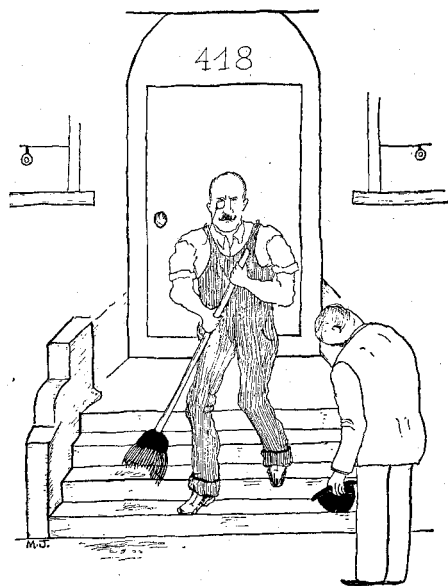
We respected money, of course. Russians after all are no different from other people. But the money our compatriots made in this country was of no importance to us. It was the money they had in the Old World that really mattered. Of a great industrialist who escaped from Russia penniless we used to say with awe and admiration: "He had 3,000,000 gold roubles—gold!" He worked as a janitor in a Lower East Side house, but in his Russian hours he continued to be the well-bred gentleman and philanthropist of old and devoted most of his time to charity. He collected money for the relief of Russian emigres; huge sums passed through his hands; we trusted him implicitly—he was a magnate, a mighty industrialist, the owner of factories and estates and magnificent racing stables, and he had 3,000,000 gold roubles—gold!

We were all absorbed in politics—Russian politics. Our party divisions remained as they were in Russia. The Social-Democratic party was still the party of the city proletariat. The Socialist Revolutionaries were still defenders of the Russian peasantry. The Constitutional Democrats represented the liberal middle class and the progressive landed gentry. The Monarchists still believed in and hoped for the restoration of the Romanov dynasty. The Cossacks constituted a group of their own; for centuries they had enjoyed certain privileges and liberties and were loath

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to part with them in exile. The New York group called itself "New York Stanitsa," which is Russian for "Military camp," and they elected their own Chief, an "Ataman."

The Socialist groups were by far the most prosperous. A majority of the old immigration were either Socialists at home or had joined the Socialist party in this country. They played an important part in the American labor movement and, quite naturally, came to the immediate aid of their fellow-Socialists who were thus enabled to continue to represent the Russian proletarian masses. The more conservative parties had no such luck. Their members knew no one in this country who could be of any help to them; they



were compelled to accept the oddest jobs and represent Russia's nobility and vested interests in abject poverty.

All the Russian parties in this country, as at home, were divided into numerous factions, for a Russian just cannot agree with too many people. Each party had its right wing, center, and left wing. Each

wing published its own little magazine which took issue with all other wings and castigated them for not understanding the true problems of Russia's resurrection. Who read the magazines except, perhaps, the people who were being attacked in them, I do not know, and never will.

In American politics we were interested but little. We knew that an election was to take place that year (it was 1924), but it was of no particular importance. There were no Democrats or Republicans among us. Only natives and immigrants gone native belonged to either of the two American parties which made no sense to us. We Russians, at least a large percentage of our immigration, were all democrats and republicans, anyway—we stood for a Democratic Republic in Russia. To have followed the intricate American pattern would have been sheer folly and a waste of time and energy, what with Republicans not agreeing with Republicans and Democrats not agreeing with Democrats and Senator Borah not agreeing with both Republicans and Democrats. Our party system was much simpler, and although there was no agreement among ourselves, either, that was an entirely different matter: we at least knew with whom we disagreed and, besides, Russians always disagree.

Our attitude toward the Americans was a mixed one. We envied them a little; they had a country they could call their own. It was, moreover, a fairly nice country; not like Russia but, in the long run, not a bad one. It could have been a very good country if Russians had settled it a few centuries ago; now it was too late; the Americans had to content themselves with what they had.

During our American hours and our enforced association with the natives we were compelled to speak their language, a most difficult and unpleasant tongue, hard and harsh, forbidding and unyield-

ing, lacking the softness and elasticity of our own Russian language. As soon as our working day was over and we had shed our overalls, we became transformed into our old selves. We became Russians. We went to Russian affairs; we assembled in Russian homes around Russian samovars; ate Russian food, drank Russian tea (the tea was, unfortunately, made in New York), and discussed Russian affairs in the Russian language.

One of our main topics was this country, and we most definitely did not like it. Russians, it must be stated, are born critics; they are critics par excellence. The reason our Socialist society at home did not come off exactly according to plan was probably due in no small measure to the fact that we are such exceptionally gifted critics. A critic is a person who knows how a thing is to be done but cannot do it. When it comes to rebuilding the world, as well as to other undertakings, minor and major, we Russians know precisely what is to be done. Our history, our literature, our art, our own lives are nothing but a continuous demonstration of our gift of criticism. Being impartial we never hesitate to criticize ourselves; yet, like most people, we vastly prefer to criticize others.

This country was definitely inferior to Russia—even to Russia as we left it. There were a few redeeming features, largely, however, of a technical nature: we did acknowledge the technical superiority of the United States. American vacuum cleaners, for instance, were much better than Russian; as a matter of fact there were no vacuum cleaners in Russia. American fountain pens were good even if some of them leaked; Russian fountain pens never leaked but they never wrote. But could anyone in his right senses compare American strawberries with Russian? or apples? or pears? or corn? or

watermelons? or cherries? Take a Russian strawberry, for example. It melts in your mouth; it is as sweet as sugar and as tart as lemon; it is mellow, full-flavored, delectable, and of such delightfully beautiful coloring that no Russian artist in this country would ever deign to paint an American strawberry on a still-life canvas.

Then there was (and still is) the American food. The bland, tasteless, so-called wholesome, American food that no Russian, however hungry, would allow himself to touch. A visit to an American house was a torture; one had to be polite and eat at least something of a horrible meal that consisted of a diminutive portion of some substance remotely tasting like meat (as if the Americans with all their wealth could not afford to serve a larger portion) together with a few boiled vegetables (that better not be discussed at all) and one miserable slice of bread—or no bread at all!

One can imagine the sympathy and compassion we felt for those unfortunate Russian men, luckily none too numerous, who were careless enough to have been caught by some scheming American females and had married them. The poor fellows, in addition to being compelled to speak English all the time, were destined to spend the rest of their lives eating wholesome American meals!

The intellectual standard of Americans, we observed, was very low. Americans were like children, fickle and uninformed. The way they pronounced our names was truly comical, and sometimes maddening. The average American knew absolutely nothing about Russia. Some Americans even thought that Kiev was a Soviet Commissar and not a city! Some of us, of course, thought that Oklahoma was not a state but the name of a former American President, but it was different with us: we were foreigners, newcomers in this coun-

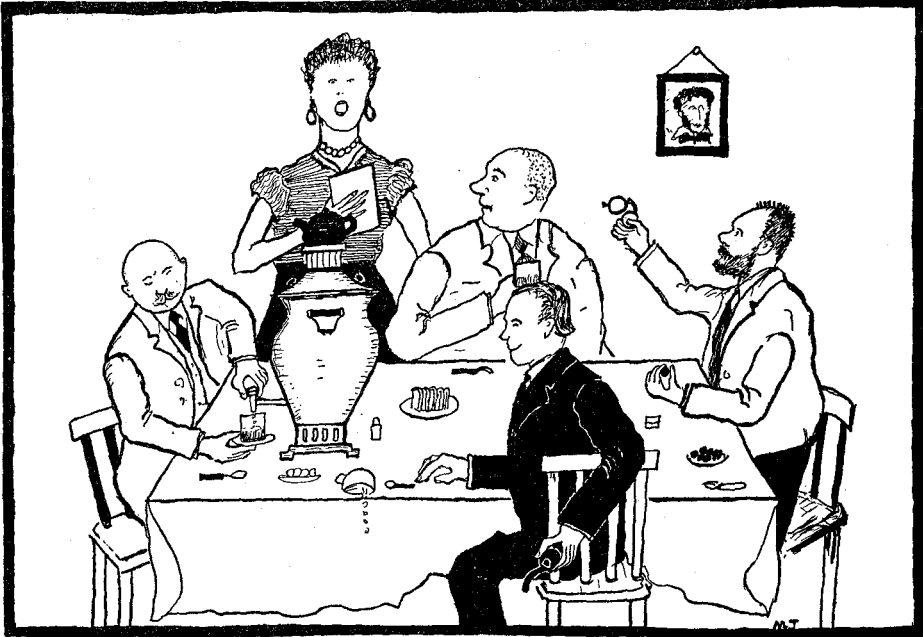
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try, green, with no knowledge of the language; one could not expect us to know who or what Oklahoma was.

It annoyed us, too, that Americans were not interested in the more serious aspects of life. Who ever heard of a nation whose newspapers headlined ball-players, printed on their front pages stories about mothers-

whenever we discussed the glaring shortcomings of American cultural life.

No, the Americans had nothing to offer us. Fortunately we did not need them. We had our own newspapers, magazines, theatres, books, societies, grocery stores, writers, dramatists, poets. Some Russians, especially writers and actors, succumbed



in-law, and called their President "Cal," as if he were a dog! It was manifest that such people could have no real, serious literature; of this we were certain. America, we knew, had produced a few good writers, but Russians were better acquainted with them than Americans. Whenever we met a native, we invariably asked him, had he read Bret Harte? (There is no "h" sound in the Russian language and we pronounce it Bret Garte.) He had not, of course. Had he read Jack London? Had he read Mark Twain's immortal story about the boy Gookelyberry Finn? No American ever heard of Gookelyberry Finn—a fact we used to point out triumphantly and venomously

to the lure of money and illusory fame and deserted to the American camp; most of us, however, remained true to our language and traditions.

For this we were richly rewarded. Not with money—who cares about money except those who have it?—but with something infinitely more precious and rare: we retained our youth. We have not aged a single day within the past twenty-five years. We have remained as we were in our language, habits, tastes, personal life, and make-up. We are still Russians through and through, to the very marrow of our bones, and not merely Russians, but young Russians! We, in this country, have discovered the mysteri-

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ous fountain of youth perennial. The society of young Russian poets, founded in 1923, still exists under the same name with the same membership. The organization of young Russian actors and actresses is still going strong with not a single member of the group capable or willing to play the part of an elderly, or even middle-aged, person. Our singers and songstresses are still exceedingly young: the passing years have left no mark on them. And of our young writers, now in their late fifties, the somewhat more mature critics say that they show great

promise and will some day gain fame and recognition.

I know they will.

News editor of the New York Russian-language daily, *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, Mikhail Jeleznov has just signed with Harper's for a book to be called *Moscow-on-the-Hudson*, incorporating the material of the pieces he has been doing for COMMON GROUND.

Mr. Jeleznov has done his own illustrations.

OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Family patterns are family patterns the United States over—probably the world over; and responsible older brothers and sisters may take comfort from a look at how the pattern persists, regardless of the racial or nationality background of the youngsters involved.



HORST SENGEL

*Though there are some
lighter moments, as these
Mexican Americans show*

VIVA ROYBAL—VIVA AMERICA

BEATRICE W. GRIFFITH

FOR THE first time since 1881, when Jose Mascarel was elected alderman for one year, Los Angeles, California, has elected a councilman of Mexican ancestry to office. Edward Roybal, a sincere, handsome, young veteran with several years of service as educational director for the Los Angeles County Tuberculosis Association, took office July 1 as councilman from the 9th district, in this the second largest Mexican city in the world.

Until recently, the apathy of the Mexican community toward voting has been a cause for cynicism among politicians throughout California. In 1938, the then incumbent Mayor of Los Angeles, when asked about the Mexican vote, tossed it off casually: "Oh, I'm not worried about the Mexican vote. All you need to do to get them to vote is to take a few baskets of groceries or a sack of beans to the east-side and they'll vote." Still, in Los Angeles, with over a quarter of a million persons of Mexican ancestry, the vote of the group has always been negligible. I remember the bitter remark of one father who, when asked why he didn't vote, said, "The Gringos come to our part of town and pat us on the back and then when they get in they give us a good going over. Why vote?"

Later, however, in 1948, this same father told me with bright-eyed enthusiasm, "It's like this for us Mexicans. If we don't complain, the Americans think we like to live the way we do—that we like these rotten shacks. We got to make a lot of noise and vote. Anyway, our streets

are so bumpy they slow up our weddings and funerals—so you got to vote to change things. Votes talk."

An example of just how loud votes talk was shown recently in Casa Blanca, California, when the widow of Ysmael R. Villegas, a Congressional Medal winner, went to her councilman to get a recreation center started for the Mexican American children in her neighborhood. She was asked, "How many votes do you represent?" When she replied that not many people voted in her neighborhood, she was told, "Well, votes talk. When your people vote, come back and see me."

The returned serviceman more than anyone else knows that the absence of a political life has seriously retarded the Spanish-speaking population in America. When these American sons of Mexican immigrants returned from a war overseas, they came with a new conception of what it means to be American. This became a living dream—a dream to get political representation for the group—the fourth largest minority in America. The lack of voting power among the Spanish-speaking throughout the Southwest, with the exception of New Mexico, has resulted in almost no representation in local communities and states, as well as in Washington. In turn, this has meant the continuation of miserable living conditions, unemployment, social discrimination.

Now the ferment of social change is under way. The war and its maturing experiences have wiped away much of the previous indifference and skepticism. Just

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as the veterans are taking advantage of the G.I. Bill to continue in school and college, to learn trades and businesses, so are they preparing to live as Americans. Helping to defend America has given them a feeling that they are a part of it, not "foreigners" or orphans as they were before. Some veterans, it is true, returned with a dog-eat-dog philosophy. But the majority have responded to their wider views of the world and their life in it by seriously planning to assume the responsibilities of citizenship at home and its accompanying franchise. For the first time in their history in Southern California, the Mexican Americans are becoming a potential threat to the electoral status quo and Anglo American leadership in the communities in which they live.

But it is not only the returned veterans who have become aware of the value of the vote. The political apathy was being gradually disturbed before—because of Franklin D. Roosevelt. His name was the spark that started thousands of Spanish-speaking persons to the polls. Looking back, one can see why his name was so magical. Many young people in the CCC and NYA provided their families with rent or food through their meager monthly checks. The WPA hired thousands of Mexican Americans on the public-works program. Political lassitude was overcome by benefits specifically associated with the election of Roosevelt.

Some Mexican immigrants, in general so indifferent to naturalization, took out citizenship papers just to have the opportunity to vote for him. Exactly what the Roosevelt name meant is illustrated by the story of Edward Roybal's grandmother, a Spanish American mother of 11 children. Her ancestors (she was from the old Chavez and Cavesa de Baca families) had helped to make history in New Mexico. Yet she voted for the first time when Roosevelt came up for re-election in 1936.

She was crippled and had to be carried to the polls. She stood in the booth, opened her ballot, stamped Roosevelt's name on it, and turned to go. When her sons protested, she countered: "There's nothing else on the ballot worth voting for." The same thing happened in other families. Thus it was that in the beginning those who voted would vote for Roosevelt and no one else; they knew what he stood for.

The little town of El Modino, near Santa Ana in the heart of the California orange belt, has demonstrated how a people completely united behind an idea can win. On March 22, 1946, Judge Paul J. McCormick ordered Orange County school officials to halt a 15-year-old practice of segregating pupils of Mexican and Latin descent in special schools. He called the policy, which isolated some 5,000 youngsters—all citizens—"arbitrary and discriminatory and in violation of their constitutional rights and illegal and void." This decision, the first of this kind involving public school practices in America, was sufficient to center a political campaign around. The decision of Judge McCormick was appealed, and during the interim segregation was resumed in the schools. One Board of Education member, vehemently anti-Mexican, was coming up for re-election in the El Modino district. A suit for contempt of Federal Court was filed, and a small group of Mexican Americans set about exploring the political possibilities of eliminating the continuing local segregation in the schools—and the school Board member who represented their district.

A group of younger men and women comprising the voter-education committee registered the little community. All went well until the day before the election, when the Board suddenly changed the hours of voting from the customary 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., to 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., on the

assumption that no "Mexicans" could afford to stay away from work. But this was a miscalculation. On election day all the "Mexicans" stayed home from work to vote for their own candidate, the town barber. He was elected by an overwhelming majority, and the Board member who had been so vehemently agitating for segregated schools for "Mexican" children lost the election.

Southern California now boasts of four councilmen of Mexican ancestry. The electoral ferment is slowly bringing changes in municipal governments, and the politicians are becoming aware of the social currents penetrating the darkened streets of the Mexican communities. They know that in California the estimated Mexican American voting potential is over a hundred thousand votes—quite a substantial block, especially since it is largely concentrated in the southern part of the state. The most cynical political candidate cannot longer afford to be indifferent. As for the Mexican Americans, by learning to make use of the most effective channel open to democracy's cultural minorities—the ballot—they may succeed in drawing the attention of the rest of the community to the needs of their neglected neighborhoods.

In commenting on the importance of Edward Roybal's election as councilman to the Latin one-eighth of the Los Angeles population, as well as to the community as a whole, the Los Angeles Daily News stated in an editorial dated July 1:

"... the rising political consciousness of this Latin one-eighth promises the beginnings of a valuable bridge-building job.

"During the modern years of Los Angeles' emergence as the third city of the nation, a gulf has separated most Mexican American citizens from the rest of the community. This gulf has been caused by many things: by language, by custom, by

educational and economic factors. It's a gulf that isn't going to be bridged overnight. But a start toward bridging it at its most strategic point can be made and is being made at the precinct polling place. For it is here citizens begin to achieve social recognition and municipal attention on a par with that accorded other segments of the population. It is here citizens start to become responsible co-participants in the life stream of the community and nation. . . .

"Yes, something new has been added to Los Angeles' civic life. The municipal household has a brighter, more up-to-date look. And the local precedents shattered by Roybal's election indicate democracy is stepping steadily forward on the home-front—that the distance of caste and culture is shrinking to fit the shrunken world."

II

The story of Ed Roybal's election is a fine example of the new spirit that pervades some Mexican communities. In order to understand what happened in this election, it is necessary to know something about the man Roybal and his vote-getting power—and about the amazing growth of the Community Service Organization that was behind him and helped put him into office.

"Eddie" Roybal has long been a leader. He was a leader in school activities in Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles and also a track star; he knew what the CCC meant to Mexican families, for he attended a CCC camp; he knew the problems the returned veterans face when going to college, for he is a veteran, and he had helped support himself in UCLA by pressing pants; he knew first-hand the economic problems of many Mexicans in his community. As educational director for the Los Angeles Tuberculosis Association, he knew their health problems. He

knew the ugly face of discrimination in employment, for doors had been slammed in his face, too. He knew the value of a democracy; he fought and his brother died to preserve it while fighting overseas. He has the reputation of being scrupulously honest and sincere. He has another quality that has endeared him to thousands who voted for him—almost unlimited patience. He does not antagonize. With a gentle but firm manner, he will hear every argument, and in the end the parties will arrive at his way of thinking, for he comes up with a solution they think they have originated. On top of these qualities he has more than his share of magnetism and charm—and he is so persuasive he could, if given a good cause, probably coax a donation out of a pinball machine.

"Eddie" Roybal first ran for councilman from the 9th district, in which approximately 38,000 Spanish-speaking persons live, in 1946. Although he was defeated in that race, which had four other candidates, he polled approximately 3,400 votes, the largest number of votes ever received by a Mexican American in California up to that time. (Two years later, in 1948, Richard Ibanez, another Mexican American, ran for Judge of the Superior Court and received 171,000 votes from Los Angeles voters. And in the same 1948 elections, Jose Chavez nearly quadrupled the 1946 votes cast for him in the 51st Assembly District.)

After his defeat in the first election, Roybal and several energetic leaders of his election committee banded themselves together into the Community Service Organization (cso), with about 15 keenly interested Mexican American men and women as a membership nucleus. For, as Roybal later said, "We realized that Americans of Mexican ancestry would achieve representation in public office

only with voter education and organization." This was in September 1947.

In the beginning, the group met once a week to plan their program of education and civic activity. They were then offered the full-time "leg work" of Fred Ross, who had been working elsewhere in Southern California under the auspices of the American Council on Race Relations. Now as field representative for the Industrial Areas Foundation (Saul Alinsky's organization that began the Back-of-the-Yards Movement in Chicago in 1939), Ross became a full-time worker for the cso. The group first met at a public playground, then grew too big and moved to the YMCA; outgrew that and moved into a public school where it holds bi-monthly meetings. The membership now numbers over 800 persons. The interesting thing about the growth of this group is the manner in which they put on a membership drive. Each of the 15 original members went out one day a week to talk to another person about the cso. "Each compadre told another compadre, and it grew like that." It was something like a small chain reaction. And it is truly a grass-roots organization. As Mrs. Maria Duran, the energetic treasurer for the recent Roybal campaign, said, "It seemed like everybody had problems and didn't know where to take them." The first committees were for Housing, Health, Registration and Membership, and these attempted to help solve the problems of the people who came into the organization. Later, other committees, such as Veterans', Civil Rights, Education, Labor Relations, Social Welfare, as well as Social, were set up and became active.

Traffic lights were set up where their absence was a hazard for children in the neighborhood; discrimination in housing was investigated, housing legislation was studied and reported upon, and occasion-

ally evicted families were housed; delinquency of children was studied; money was raised for summer camps (and always the contributions are small, for these are poor people, but people who say, "It's our job and we are doing it"); health drives were put on for immunization and for x-rays to detect tuberculosis; meetings were held to try to promote understanding between labor unions and the community; where citizenship rights were infringed upon, as by police injustice or segregation in public institutions, a committee served to inform cso members and to secure legal assistance where warranted; and last, but of utmost importance, people were registered to vote and informed of the issues coming up in the 1948 national elections.

The cso realized that to bring up the bargaining power of the Mexican community, there must be a "get-out-the-vote" drive. In October 1947 a campaign was started to secure volunteers for deputy registrars. Sixty-three persons volunteered. But classes for registrars were held only during the daytime, effectively eliminating working men and women who could not afford to lose a day's work. After considerable discussion, aided by the Central Labor Council of the AFL, the local office agreed to hold an unprecedented evening class during which the 63 Mexican American registrars, mostly young men and women, were sworn in.

To realize just what people can do with dreams, and energy to match those dreams, it is encouraging to look at the record of those 63 registrars. Each of the 63 worked his own precinct. Since some were more active than others, a contest was set up for the whole eastside with over 30 prizes contributed by local businessmen. Teams of 2 and 3 members went out every night but Saturday; teams of 8 to 10 would cover a whole precinct; sometimes they would set up tables near churches on Sundays, and in the Plazita Cathedral near

Olivera Street 135 new voters were registered one bright Sunday morning.

Never did they forget that if Los Angeles had a Mexican American councilman there would be voter representation—a strong voice to speak for over a quarter of a million people who were now silent.

When the campaign ended, over 15,000 new Mexican American voters had been registered. They had assumed civic responsibility and could speak for their American children. The veterans would vote as Americans, for as Americans they had fought (it was as apathetic "foreigners" the people had been silent before). The enthusiasm grew. One veteran registered more than 2,000 new voters; another, a paraplegic, won a \$100 bond as a prize.

For the most part money came in for Roybal's campaign in small amounts—nickels, dimes, and quarters—from the poor families in the area. The Committee for Roybal grew in size. Dances were given to raise money; one was held with only the registration receipt accepted as a ticket at the door. Members gave parties, contributed tamales, enchiladas, tacos, and drinks, then paid to come and eat them. Small merchants gave perfumes, shaving sets, and cakes for raffles. The dream grew.

And how the Committee worked, a committee that grew from 20 to about 300. They worked long hours on their jobs during the day, stayed longer hours at night, some going home at four o'clock in the morning after having been out to tack up posters, address or stuff envelopes, or make out precinct lists. It was as one man said: "When you believe in something, it even doesn't hurt you to stay up so late, because every day you live is one day less, and we got to make up for lost time."

In the primaries there were four candidates from the 9th district. Two Spanish-

speaking men had been advised to run by outsiders (with expenses paid) in order to split the Mexican vote, but they were fortunately talked out of it and they in turn backed Roybal. Roybal came in first in the primaries, receiving 12,000 votes—3,000 more than the incumbent councilman, Parley Christianson. Roybal thus had a plurality of votes but not a majority.

In the final run-off election there were about 300 men and women, boys and girls working day and night for Roybal under the very able leadership of Roger Johnson. The campaign headquarters, donated by Rafael Trujillo, editor of *Publicidad*, a small Spanish-language newspaper, were set up in a photographic studio next door to a singing teacher over a small department store. Then the Mexican American owner of Paramount Hall, which was located over a cantina on Brooklyn Avenue, donated his place for the larger meetings which frequently had more than a hundred persons gathered for work on the campaign.

For the first time in Los Angeles history, various nationality groups combined their forces to work unanimously for a councilmanic election. Roybal's sincerity and honesty, as well as the warm tan of his complexion, gave them confidence. They worked for him, first, as the best man to represent the whole community, and second, remembering their own dreams and battles for representation, they voted for him to represent them as minorities. Persons of Negro, Jewish, as well as Japanese, Chinese, Italian, Filipino, and Russian ancestry went into their own neighborhoods and plugged Roybal. Their various language newspapers often gave free space to the campaign.

When the Negroes asked why they should back him—how was his campaign different from any other—Roybal told them, "Our skin is also brown—our

battle is the same. Our victory cannot but be a victory for you, too." Prominent Negro leaders, including the Negro State Assemblyman, Gus Hawkins, threw their weight into the campaign to elect Roybal. (After he was elected, the Negro Committee gave him a testimonial dinner to show their appreciation, at which were gathered professional men as well as members of the Negro press. As a token of their admiration, they presented Roybal with a handsome tie, and it was this tie he wore when he took office last July 1, as councilman.)

Edward Roybal knew from his own experience just how "the battle is the same." Before the war he had applied for a foreign trade position with a large oil company. He had successfully passed the preliminary tests and interviews for the job. Then came the day for his final interview before he was to leave for Central America. As he walked in through the door, the official looked up. "Oh," he said, embarrassed, "there's been some mistake. This job requires a blond."

Several years later, returning from the Army, Roybal became cost accountant of a large fruit-produce company in Los Angeles. When the personnel manager was called to war, Roybal was given his position, with the admonition by the Board of Directors that he was to leave the personnel as it was; he was not to hire any Negroes, Mexicans, or Jews. Shortly after he took the new office, personnel requests began to come in. A chemist and approximately 80 seasonal workers were wanted immediately. He was successful in persuading the company to try out the best applicant for the position of chemist—a young Jewish boy, who was so capable and efficient that he was later hired on a permanent basis. Roybal then decided to conduct a careful experiment and see if he could change the company's discriminatory policy in its hiring of seasonal work-

ers. To do this he had to sell the idea to the Board, and for that he first had to have qualified workers. He set about to find them and scraped the bottom of the labor barrel when he interviewed over two hundred men known as "floaters" from a USES office. After he had carefully picked his men, he told them it was up to them to back him up, to prove themselves capable workers. Again he went to the Board and asked them to try the Mexican and Negro workers, and they gave them a trial.

At the end of six months, a time-and-efficiency study was made on their performance. It showed that these "floaters" after working for only a few months had a higher efficiency rating than the regular employees. Furthermore, they proved to be more prompt and had a record of almost no absenteeism during the six-months period. The Board of Directors agreed to rehire the men annually, and the president offered letters of recommendation to those who requested it. To this day the company has maintained its new policy of non-discrimination as a result of the courage and intelligent efforts of that personnel manager—Edward Roybal—now city councilman.

Aside from the election work in the predominantly Mexican American areas of the 9th district, two successful campaigns were made in Anglo neighborhoods. Campaign workers went into Bunker Hill to hold an old-fashioned political rally. In this area, of which one part is the worst in the city for poor housing, delinquency, vice, and poverty, Mexican American college students with books under their arms went from door to door. They sat down to tell the tired men and women of their new hopes, of the plans and dreams they held if Ed Roybal were elected. Few could resist the sincerity of their appeal: "We want to improve our

conditions; won't you please vote for him?"

At the rally, Stuart Hamblin, the radio entertainer, and a violinist friend gave a show with free coffee and cakes—the cakes contributed by local bakeries. Skeptical, most of the men and women came for the "free eats," but they were excited by what they heard; and in their drab neighborhood hope took form and color. That night youngsters of 14 and 15 volunteered their services, directed traffic, ran errands, passed out literature, and made themselves important. Then they mobbed Roybal and Hamblin for autographs.

The other Anglo neighborhood that backed Roybal was Wynverwood Homes, a large well-to-do residential area, also in the 9th district, but across the river from Bunker Hill. It is a restricted private housing project of about 5,000 persons, to which Roybal as a Mexican American would not be eligible, although he represented Wynverwood on the Rent Advisory Committee in the 7th Rental Advisory District. Two committees were set up for Roybal from this project, and in the May election he carried all five precincts in the area. When he ran for councilman two years ago, he received exactly 14 votes.

Despite the fact that the Central Labor Council, AFL, backed Christianson, Roybal's opponent, other labor unions supported Roybal; and the national CIO Political Action Committee, the ILGWU (AFL), as well as several AFL locals made financial contributions. The Steel Workers of the CIO contributed time, personnel, equipment, and money. They were responsible for the gaily decorated sound trucks that blasted Roybal's name through the crowded streets of the 9th district during the last days of the campaign. They also made the largest financial contribution of any group.

Probably no recent councilman has

been elected in Los Angeles on a war chest of \$5,500, as was Roybal. Usually it costs about \$15,000. But Roybal had the cooperation of several hundred people who wanted to see him elected, including a hundred college youngsters of all nationalities who knew what he represented to them. You can't buy that kind of work.

The careful work of the Community Service Organization in conducting the campaign to get new voters registered and, later, to get out the vote had borne healthy new fruit. The fruit did not grow without hard work, however. Often 40 to 50 persons at a time, all of whom had jobs elsewhere, worked most of the night, stopping only for coffee and sandwiches, or occasionally to sing some of the *corridos* with Roybal which had been composed for the election. Fred Ross was in charge of the precinct organization in the Spanish-speaking areas. One hundred fifty persons were involved in this part of the campaign, although Ross could personally work in it only after he too had finished his official work in the cso—after hours, that is. One hundred block workers went from door to door to talk and leave literature. Teams of precinct workers went out six nights a week to talk to the voters. They were unique in this activity in that they made up and printed their own campaign literature. This in itself was a tremendous job, inasmuch as it was financed on a shoestring.

The block work was supplemented by enthusiastic telephone teams of about 85 people spread out all over Los Angeles. The work involved a tremendous amount of detail. Individual 3x5 cards were made on 10,000 Spanish-speaking voters. After their telephone numbers, or the numbers of their neighbors when they didn't have phones, had been obtained, the names were transcribed onto letter-size paper, five copies of which were typed up and in

street address order, so that the precinct telephone teams could immediately track down by personal visits those who failed to show up in the early hours of election.

Christianson's committee had a telephone campaign, too—based on a race-baiting issue, and confined to what were presumed to be Anglo voters. "We don't want Mexicans in the city hall, do we? Roybal is a Mexican." These telephone enthusiasts, however, made one big mistake. They forgot that Negroes have Anglo names also, and when the Negroes were called and given the "Roybal is a Mexican" line, they blew up in wrath.

The telephone committee prepared for every contingency. On election day each worker was given a mimeographed set of instructions giving basic information and arguments to counter the propaganda of the opposition. They began at 8 o'clock in the morning to remind voters on their lists to vote early. They issued phone calls during the day as "Bulletins" to keep the voters up to date on the activities of the opposition. By this means they were able to counter the last false step of Roybal's opponent: in the 11 o'clock mail of election day, postal cards were received depicting a Mexican playing a guitar, dressed in the *charro* costume so familiar to California fiestas, the card written in Spanish and signed by a discredited politico used by the opposition in a last-minute attempt to defeat Roybal. It suggested that the "communist" disguised as a Mexican would likely mine the city hall. (This in spite of the fact that one of Roybal's backers was Msgr. Thomas J. O'Dwyer.)

By the time the last phone "bulletin" was issued at 5 o'clock, all phone lines leading into Boyle Heights were jammed by those getting out last-minute voters. These dramatic calls no doubt added to the winning votes that put Roybal in

office. Further, they convinced professional politicians that the careful organization and months of work on the part of this political committee meant a new leaven in the political life of Los Angeles. The "Mexican" vote was here to stay. No longer would these people be silent; no longer could they be ignored.

The car pool was a very necessary part of the campaign, too, not only to get cripples and ill persons to the polls, but for a reason singularly "Mexican"—that is, the location of polling places so far away from homes, so inconveniently placed, that the great bulk of the voting population would be discouraged from voting. Now "Mexican" voters were brought up from little barrios and back streets, hills and far-off places, brought to the polls and they voted.

The sound trucks rode hour by hour through the streets until the polls closed. There was also a little old 1914 blue Ford with a red and white fringed top, plastered with "Vote for Roybal" signs, full of young students who shouted and sang to all on the sidewalks, "We want a new model! Help us get a new model!"

Election night, after the votes were counted, Roybal had 20,581 votes to Parley Christianson's 12,015.

Thus was a bridge started at the most strategic point—the ballot box—started across the gulf that has separated the American community from its Mexican neighborhood for nearly a century. Perhaps someday a bridge will bring together the life streams of the two communities. The combination of a dream, organization, and hard work had made an important victory possible. Spanish-speaking people in Los Angeles had taken their first big step forward, a step forward from discrimination and injustice. They had also demonstrated anew that justice is never given, it is exacted; freedom is never granted, it is won.

III

A victory for any minority group struggling for democracy in America is a victory for all Americans. Not only will Spanish-speaking Americans throughout the Southwest take encouragement from Roybal's election, but it can also be a spur to those who have forgotten the real values of democracy; to those who are cynical about its achievements; and to those who take it for granted. Democracy has come alive for a people in California who knew little of it prior to the war. And in Los Angeles, where the only two Congressional Medal winners were the sons of immigrants—Sadao Munimori and David Gonzalez—there is real and lively interest in Roybal, as well as curiosity about this representative of a people who have hitherto spoken only through their work and songs but who now speak through the vote. In a state where the votes in the electoral college number 25, this election cannot but be significant for the whole nation, for it is an indication of the political interest that has come alive among California's Spanish-speaking Americans—of whom there are nearly a million. It is not impossible that in the not too distant future they will determine state elections by being the balance of power, as they have proved they could be in small communities throughout the southern part of this changing state.

The words of another Mexican American councilman, Andreas Morales, of Chino, California, come to my mind. He had just been elected to office in a small farming community, fifty per cent of which is of Mexican population. Five of his backers were Anglo Americans. I asked him why he wanted to go into politics. He replied: "I didn't want to go into politics. I wanted to live a clean private life. I used to think that to do good was

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enough; anybody who did good got their payment doing it. But now I know it isn't enough just to do good. You have to fight to do good. And since the war we have a chance to be Americans, and we have to work for that—for that understanding. We have to work together, the Americans with us and we with the Americans. Because everybody knows God made only one people—not my people, not your people—just one people. We

have to work for that—for that understanding.”

Beatrice Griffith's many stories and articles about Mexican Americans in CG were incorporated in her Houghton Mifflin Fellowship book, American Me, published last Fall. Her "In the Flow of Time," in our Autumn 1948 issue, was chosen for Martha Foley's The Best American Short Stories, 1949.

SO YOU LIVE GOOD

KARL DETZER

MRS. DOMINIC SAVINO was walking rapidly along a grimy street in Chicago's noisy, polyglot west side. Dirty babies, hungry dogs, ash heaps, and broken glass littered the sidewalks. Mrs. Savino walked fast, setting her sturdy shoes down firmly. There was urgency in the gait of this short, dark woman of 49.

To any passing stranger Mrs. Savino was only another hard-working neighbor hurrying home. For the stranger would have no way of knowing that tomorrow, in a great gilded ballroom, the mayor of Chicago, the city's business leaders, the rich and socially powerful, would stand 1,600 strong to cheer this peasant woman, to proclaim her "Chicago's Mother of the Year."

Mrs. Savino, herself, didn't guess, this busy April afternoon, what honor awaited her. Had she known, she probably would not have taken the time to think about it. She had so many really important things to think about.

She stopped suddenly. Across the way two men were piling battered furniture into a sagging truck, bringing it from

the door of a tenement slightly less tawdry than its neighbors. Mrs. Savino plunged into the dark interior of the tenement. It took only a moment to find the small apartment from which the furniture came. She barged into it, asking questions.

"Is moving? Is vacant? Who's janitor? You? How much rent? Ten dollars week? Too high, but I take. I pay advance." She pawed in her handbag, unfolded a five dollar bill, handed it over. "Come back in half hour and pay rest."

Six blocks away, eight minutes later, she was climbing the stairs of a filthy tenement. In a windowless room on the fourth floor a young woman and three sick children huddled.

"How's husband?" Mrs. Savino asked. "Still drink?"

"He's quit," the woman answered and smiled. "He's got a new job. A good one. If we just could find a place to live. . . ."

"Have got," Mrs. Savino said. She smiled broadly. "Is good place, close by school. Come."

The deal was settled promptly. The new

flat had three small rooms instead of a single, crowded cubicle. More important, there was a window in each of the rooms. And running water in the sink, without having to go downstairs.

"Must hurry," Mrs. Savino said, now that this job was finished. "Got lots to do."

It was nearly six o'clock when she returned to the Erie Street Settlement, from which she works without pay, six afternoons and many evenings each week, as a "neighborhood volunteer." She lives in a small, clean flat next door with her four grown children and her janitor husband. For 20 years she has been "helping out the neighbors" of all creeds and colors and hasn't accepted a penny for her effort.

"What for should somebody pay?" she asked, astounded. "Why I help neighbors? You gotta live till you die. So you live good."

In 1948 Mrs. Savino gave 1,589 hours to helping her neighbors; the people at Erie Street Settlement, from which she hurries forth each day and where she returns each night, added them up. Her son, who like his father is a janitor, her kindergarten-teacher daughter, the two younger children who are finishing their educations, help with the family support. Mrs. Savino doesn't neglect them. She keeps a spick-and-span house for them, in itself no small task in a region where grit seeps day and night through even tightly closed windows.

A single day, pounding the sidewalks with Mrs. Savino, climbing dark stairs, can wear down even a hardy reporter. For she never pauses, once she starts out at her long, steady stride, never takes time for even a minute's rest. When she isn't tramping from door to door, she is helping neighbors in their crowded, cluttered homes.

"We go here," she says. "Woman sick. Got no money. Maybe can help."

The flat was on the first floor, approached by an alley. Its door sagged so that the lock didn't catch. The last person to leave had tied it shut with a piece of grocery string, fastened to the doorknob and to a nail driven into the wall.

Mrs. Savino called out cheerfully as she stepped into the dark, airless, cluttered room. An old woman lay on a sagging, disordered bed. She looked up, startled.

"Oh, you," she said and smiled. "I knew you'd come."

"Sure," Mrs. Savino nodded, and the little bouquet on her hat bobbed up and down. "Sure, I come. How's things? How you feel?"

"Bad," the old woman's voice was thin. "It's my back. If I could just get up. . . ." She looked around the cluttered room.

"When did doctor come?"

"Yesterday, I guess. I lose track, lying here. Maybe the day before. The lady upstairs comes down and helps."

"Got medicine? All gone? I call doctor. He come back." Mrs. Savino looked at the bare shelves above the cold stove. "Need milk. Need bread. Will send."

While she talked, the strong, square Savino hands were busy straightening the bedclothes, picking scraps off the floor, fussing with the torn window curtain.

"Rent paid?" she asked without looking at the woman on the bed. There was no answer. "Okay. Will take care. Don't give a worry. All come out all right."

Her next stop was five minutes away in spite of her long, steady stride. Here a frightened Negro woman smiled as she opened the door. The flat was cleaner, the furniture better than most in the neighborhood.

"How people treat you now, Mrs. Smith?" said Mrs. Savino.

"Good," the Negro woman replied. "We haven't had any more trouble. You sure helped us."

"Will be no more trouble," Mrs. Savino said firmly. "I told boys, leave Mrs. Smith alone. So they leave you alone. Maybe you go church with me Sunday, eh?"

"Sure," the woman in the doorway agreed.

This neighborhood is predominantly Italian American, but last year the first Negro family crossed Milwaukee Avenue, long a barrier, and moved in, and Mrs. Savino anticipated trouble.

She was not surprised when someone came running to say that a crowd had gathered in front of the Negro house. Half-grown young hoodlums were heaving stones at the windows. Mrs. Savino put on her hat and walked swiftly to the miserable little shack about which the crowd still milled, taunting. The Negro family remained out of sight behind broken windows.

"Go home," Mrs. Savino shouted at the crowd. "You, Joe! You, Al! You, Fred! Home! This lady, here, friend of mine. Make trouble for her it is trouble for me. You beat it, now, quick!"

The crowd melted.

The police, who too often look on the soft ways of social workers with disdain, were immensely pleased with Mrs. Savino's direct approach. One officer said later, "That lady's got what it takes! Those young hoodlums don't dare start anything. She just don't stand for any foolishness."

"Jesus don't hate colored people," she says, and that settles the matter as far as she's concerned. When she faces a hard decision she asks herself, "What would Jesus do?" and acts accordingly. Having thus simplified most problems of ethics, finance, and domestic relations, she has a clear mind, unhampered by doubts.

The "Mother of Erie Street," as the newspapers call her, was born in a village

near Naples, came to America when she was 20, and lived with relatives on a bleak northern Indiana farm. There she met Dominic, who had come from her native village. They married and went to Chicago where the four children were born. Each Sunday the whole family trudged to the Italian church, a long hot walk in summer, a cold walk in winter.

"One Sunday I say to my husband," Mrs. Savino recollects, "'Look, the people come out of that small church across street. Should try it,' I say. 'Is nearer.' So we try."

It was the non-sectarian chapel of the Erie Street Settlement, and Mrs. Savino could feel the warmth of the greetings she received at the door.

"So we come ever since," Mrs. Savino explains. "Is nice church. Friendly. Nice people. Nice club rooms. Books. Lots of fun."

The family found that the welcome at the settlement always was genuine, and when she could spare an hour from "the kids" Mrs. Savino would slip in to help—whether with sweeping, washing dishes, or preparing for a children's party. But it was not until the last of her own brood was in high school that this Italian American woman made a regular practice of volunteer work in the neighborhood.

"Women have kids best stay home with them," she says. "Is her job. When kids grow up, then help neighbors."

She not only pounds the sidewalks and climbs the stairs in the dismal region, giving a needed hand, but inside the settlement helped organize a volunteer band of 35, called "Erie's Cheery Workers." Their slogan, as Mrs. Savino repeats it, is: "We got hands to work. We got love in hearts. We work."

She has no idea how many children in the over-populated neighborhood are her friends. However, a walk through the mean streets is interrupted constantly by

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shrill cries and by small, dirty hands reaching up to her. She has a word, a grin, a pat on the head for the youngsters who rush to meet her everywhere.

Each year the State Street Council, made up of Chicago's leading merchants, asks all social agencies to nominate their choices for "Mother of the Year." It's a high honor and this year 600 names went before the board of judges.

The 600 were invited to the annual luncheon, an elegant affair. The city's top business executives were there, presidents of big corporations, famous doctors, preachers, and lawyers. The Rev. Preston Bradley delivered the invocation; the mayor welcomed the guests; Joel Goldblatt, successful department store head, presented the awards.

Mrs. Savino sat calmly, listening. As far as she knew, she was merely one of the 600. She enjoyed the food; it was nice to have someone else do the cooking for a change. Like the 1,600 other people in the room, she wondered which mother would win the prize this year.

Then the moment came. Joel Goldblatt stood up and said: "And now I want to tell a story. It began back in 1920. A young Italian girl . . ." Mrs. Savino leaned forward. The speaker went on. "Spoke no English . . . faith, determination, character . . . neighbors unfriendly at first . . ."

Mrs. Savino was frowning. The story sounded familiar.

"Symbol of good will," Joel Goldblatt was saying. "Real spirit of America . . . salute this remarkable lady . . . the Little Saint of Erie Street . . ."

Then Mrs. Savino noticed that everybody was standing up and applauding. That Mr. Goldblatt was motioning toward her. Then she was standing beside the mayor, who was saying nice things to her. Everybody was saying nice things. Mrs. Savino was crying a little and smiling a little and photographers were saying, "Look this way, please."

And Girl Scouts were giving her expensive-looking roses and the mayor was helping pin a medal on her—a medal with diamonds—and a reporter was saying: "Fifteen hundred and eighty-nine hours work! How come . . ."

"Sure," Mrs. Savino said, repeating her simple, sustaining philosophy. "You gotta live till you die. So you live good."

Karl Detzer is a veteran of both wars in responsible posts, deeply interested in crime and law enforcement and civic affairs. Author of many books, among them Carl Sandburg: A Study in Personality, and The Mightiest Army, he is a roving editor of the Reader's Digest, covering the Middle West.

ITALIAN TO THE MOON OVER NEW YORK

JOE PAPALEO

*How many nights have you coldly gestured
while I missed the moments when the years flew,
and now I question your pendant face.
Gracious Moon, I have come
again in anguish
to admire you.
You watched the last night
upon the bay when I
might have sung to you.
You followed the ship
whose hopeful ones dreamed
of a golden trip
to a golden city.
Did you see me disappear
within a frame house
for my adopted years?
When did you see
the metamorphosis
of me? When children
mocked my halted speech?
If they could see reflected
in your light, how we
were young together
by olive trees, skies
that defy remembering,
could they be young
as one should be young?
But they hardly look
toward the sky,
and I must try
remembering again
what was too short
but happiness enough.
If they would only
turn their eyes to you,
with unbought luxury
we could admire you
whole evenings long
within a sky of song.*

THE PECAN TREE

R. R. AARONSON

SWARTHY SICILIANS with big black mustaches, carrying their meager belongings in a bundle, arrived with hammering hearts at New Orleans harbor after an interminable voyage across the Atlantic and around the Gulf of Mexico.

The Inspector at the harbor did not bother to examine their precious *passaporti*, merely asking: "Whom do you have in America?" The answer usually was a relative in *Nov'Orlenza* or a *paesano* working on a sugar-cane plantation. Although immigrants brought a few lire with them to prove they were not impecunious, rarely did an Inspector demand to be shown the money, but he might ask: "Is there someone in America who will give you food and shelter, until you find work?"

"Until you find work," the immigrant would repeat to himself. Why, one did not have to look for work in America. Was there not gold in the streets and work to be had for the asking?

Newly arrived Sicilians were greeted with hugs, kisses, and tears of joy by kinfolk and hurried off to the Old French Quarter on St. Philip Street and Chartres Street, inhabited principally by Sicilian immigrants—close to the scrolled wrought ironwork balcony on St. Peter Street. In the homes that were filled with waiting relatives there were more hugs, kisses, and tears of joy. "And here we are. Here we find ourselves in America. How are you? How do you feel? And what do you say? How was the voyage on the ocean?"

They compared their fares and the

days spent on the steamship that brought them to blessed America. "Forty dollars, 28 days without seeing land." "Thirty-eight dollars, 29 days on the water." "Sixteen dollars, forty cents, steerage, 31 days without seeing the light of God." "Forty dollars, 31 days, one day in the harbor because of fog."

"Thirty-one days! Thirty-one days!" repeated a listener. "Why not even Christopher Columbus took that long to come to America!"

Over their wine came all the news of the home town: who was born, who lived, who died, and who "hanged" himself—i.e., who married. For a Sicilian's troubles started when he married, with no work, no bread, and a baby every year. How did they say it? "Get married, get married in repose, and put yourself in the real world of woes."

Townsmen told how they had had another bad year; the crops had failed because of lack of rain, the peasants imploring pity of the sun. The churches were filled with praying people; the statue of the gold-crowned Madonna and the Bambino was carried out to the feverish fields, the priests with raised arms blessing the burned earth.

But who could understand the ways of Nature, for the lightning, thunder, and water did not come, so the sickles and scythes had nothing to do but scan the sky for rain clouds; the threshing horses that trampled the ripe golden wheat chased flies; the grain sieves just sat in the sun giving company to the empty grain sacks;

and the mills passed their time watching to see which way the wind blew. The men had spirit only to make their sign of the cross upon arising. Night and day, all were planning to get to America. So many Sicilians were departing for America they wished themselves birds—they wished they had wings to fly the ocean to America, for the Postal Carriage was not large enough (how many could get in—seven, eight persons) and the townsmen were being driven by cart and mule to the railway station at Castlevetrano on their way to America and New Orleans.

In New Orleans so many immigrants came to homes of relatives at the same time that often as many as four families would be living in two rooms, packed tight as salted sardines in a barrel, with sheets hung on ropes separating the families as they slept on the floor at night—until the newcomers rented rooms nearby. “Nearby” to a Sicilian meant upstairs, downstairs, next door, in the next house, across the street, or around the corner.

As Sicilians were poor in possessions but rich in family, they passed their lives sharing and dividing their love. “After marriage, divide your love between parents and wife,” goes the Sicilian proverb. Sicilian parents were not content with the grape-cluster of the periodic visit with their children. They needed the whole vineyard of all their children all the time. They loved deeply and longed to be deeply loved in return: “Laud me, my son, so my daughter-in-law can hear it.” In America, as in Sicily, they were never satisfied with drinking the glassful of the purple wine of filiation. They wanted the whole liter, the whole cask; they were happy only when they were drunk and drowning in it. The word “gregarious” is weak when applied to Sicilians. It is an aqueous, diluted word, a wine-and-water word. There is no full strength, no wine-alone word, adequate to describe a Si-

cilian’s fierce affection for his family, for another Sicilian, for someone he chooses to smile upon as his friend.

Sicilians found Orleanians a warm, friendly people who retained their European customs and their superstitions. In fact, New Orleans seemed not unlike Sicily with her semi-tropical climate, her courtyards, and the street vendors carrying baskets of flowers—“Flow-ers! Ah have nice flow-ers! Flow-ers!”—and fruit.

Many Sicilian immigrants became fruit sellers in the French Market. The stalls of the Market held everything: fruit, coffee, meat, fish, clothes. Here one could even engage a doctor or a midwife. These fruit sellers had come to America expecting to find gold in the streets and no *verdura*, but they found Louisiana a rich and fertile land, abounding in vegetables, flowers, fruit. Gold dripped from the dark-leaved trees of Louisiana: lemons, oranges, “sour oranges” (grapefruit), and mandarins.

Immigrants who came from the numerous fishing towns along the coast of Sicily plied their trade from the wharves of New Orleans. The blue waters around Louisiana held shrimp, crab, oysters, and a large variety of fish. The fishermen cast their nets daily, and gathered in a silver haul. Disposing of their catch, they spent the rest of their time mending torn meshes and hanging them up to dry. Sicilians also worked with Negroes unloading green bananas from the ships that came to New Orleans harbor. But while the white man occasionally helped himself to a ripening-to-gold banana—usually the first he had ever seen—the Negro was never permitted to take one.

Immigrants were overwhelmed at the first sight of the large colored population in Louisiana, for though Sicily was but ninety miles from Africa, few Negroes made their appearance on that Island. In

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father's home town there had been only one "Black," a Negro servant to Don Ricco, and he did not come directly from Africa, but was brought down from northern Italy.

Here in New Orleans Sicilians could not quite become accustomed to the Negro's humility toward a white man, any white—though he be an illiterate immigrant, who could not even write his name. The Negro would stop, bow from the waist, and step aside—often into the street—to let the white man pass. On the plantations Negro huts were segregated. In the fields, however, Negroes and immigrants worked side by side in harmony, cutting down the sugar-cane.

By far the greatest number of immigrants among the heavy influx of laborers from Sicily during the 1890s and early 1900s found work in the sugar-cane field parishes of Ascension, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John, and West Baton Rouge. By train, immigrants arrived at an outlying village on the banks of a bayou. There, a Negro, for a fee of 10 cents per passenger, rowed them across to a sugar-cane plantation.

Up the muddy road they walked to the door of a hut filled with waiting townsmen. "*Ce permissu?*" came the smiling request for permission to enter. Shouts of "*Avanti! Trasi! Accomodarsi!*" greeted the newcomers. These included not only farm laborers, but men of all trades who could not earn their bread at home. They had left behind their awl, razor, mattock, trowel, saw, and osier baskets, to take up the machete in the cane fields. It was not uncommon to find even Catholic priests cutting cane, always wearing their white clergyman's collar—priests who could not be idle waiting for new churches to be built, waiting for old ones to be enlarged. Honest labor was not a disgrace; hunger was not a sin; did not a priest have to eat, too?

Long, long afterward, my father remembered best the three trees that grew behind the wooden hut which he shared with his brother and townsmen on a sugar-cane plantation. They were a fig tree, a sorb-apple, and the pecan tree. The fig and the sorb-apple were familiar to him, for they were also native to Sicily, but the giant glossy-green pecan tree was new and strange. This was the year 1895, when my future father joined *paesani* who had been in Louisiana three, five, some as long as seven years.

All of Sicily was there, every province represented: Palermo, Catania, Siracusa, Girgenti, Trapani. . . . Half of Italy was there, the southern half: Napoli, Calabria. . . . Side by side worked Sicilians, Italians (both were called ugly names guttural with g's—greenhorn! guinea! dago! big-wop!), Frenchmen, Germans, Negroes, a few Spaniards, a few Jews. Men from three quarters of Europe were in Louisiana when my father was there, many coming from as far as the mountains of the moon. The faded threads of gold, scarlet and purple unraveled from the frayed tapestry that was Europe, to be woven into the newer flaming fabric, the miniature Europe, that was Louisiana.

Strangely enough, sugar-cane was cultivated in Sicily centuries before it reached the New World. It was planted on the Island of the Sun by the Portuguese early in the 15th century, and was subsequently carried by Christopher Columbus to Santo Domingo. From there the Jesuit Fathers brought it to Louisiana in 1751. Sicilians in the Louisiana sugar-cane fields found the gold-green cane gushing from the earth, the thick stalks turning purplish, a maroon-purple, when ripe and ready for cutting at harvest time. Sugar-cane was planted in the rich moist soil of the lowlands, the bottomlands on the banks of the Mississippi—Hester Plantation,

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Mount Houmas Plantation—and in the alluvial deposits of its numerous bayous.

Living quarters for the laborers were usually within walking distance of the cane fields, though on the larger plantations, workers were carried to the fields in wagons drawn by mules (there was always gold-tasselled corn growing to feed the mules). This section was called the *carré* by the French, the quarter, corrupted to *coro* by the Sicilians. It consisted of one-roomed huts built on stilts, like spindly legs, in long double rows facing each other, with dirt roads running between them. The huts had a hole in the wall, a single eye, which served as a window, leaving the hut dark as the Grotto of Bethlehem. An immigrant and his wife had a hut for themselves (on the walls above the beds she always nailed an unframed paper print of the Madonna and the Bambino); otherwise many men shared a room crowded with beds—a bed here, a bed there, wherever you looked a bed. The workers were housed free, given firewood free, by the plantation owner.

Behind each hut was a backhouse, a *baccausu*, as the immigrants called them.



A *baccausu* consisted of four boards and a hole in the ground.

Mud was knee-deep, the shacks seeming to sink in the mire, the women eternally washing the floor, mud-covered even though mud-caked shoes were left at the doors. When there were heavy storms, the long sharp needles of rain sting-

ing the mighty Mississippi aroused him and, ragin my or, spread his muddy blue flooding the quarter. The immigrants often had to quickly bundle their few belongings and be taken by slow-moving wagon to higher, drier ground.

Plantation owners encouraged Sicilians to send for their wives. Although sugarcane harvesting was a man's job, a woman worked in her sunbonnet (she called it *bonnetta*) in the cane fields until the day she expected her baby. At the first twinge of pain, the husband rushed off to New Orleans to fetch the *mammama*, the Florentine midwife, who would bring their child into the world—the New World. Sicilians with families were given a little more ground than single men in the rear of their habitations to plant vegetable seeds. No matter how exhausted they were after a strenuous day in the fields, they tended *la terra beneditta*. The immigrants grew their *verdura* from seeds bought at the commissary: celery, chicory, cardoon, bulbous blooms of gray-green artichokes, kale, squash, eggplant, tomatoes, and strawberries. And fava beans.

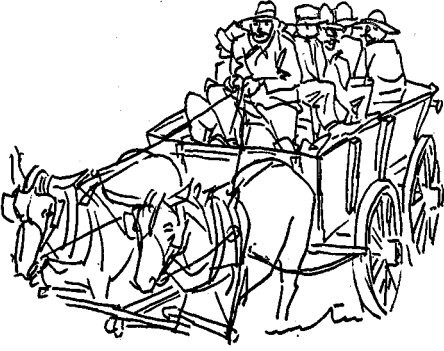
Out in the open was a small brick oven in which bread was baked, usually once a week. A barrel of flour purchased at the plantation store or commissary, owned by the plantation boss, cost \$3, and would last a family of five two to three months. Inside the stifling room was an open fireplace with a cooking-pot suspended over burning logs and "coal-of-wood" (charcoal). The children of Sicilian immigrants, who never attended school though their parents stayed as long as ten years on the plantations, prepared the greens toward evening, and boiled water—which they drew from a well—for the macaroni, to be ready for their parents and *paesani* boarders when they returned from the cane fields.

As they sat down to the table, they

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made the sign of the cross, and at the end of the meal kissed the tips of their fingers and touched the table saying: "Lord, I thank Thee!"

A few Sicilians kept livestock—a goat for milk, a few ducks, chickens. Rats as



big as cats came at night and attacked the squawking chickens, killing many of them. The immigrants rarely saw any red meat—unless they traveled to New Orleans—and when the men could no longer stand their meat-hunger, they ventured into the dense forests of Louisiana with shotguns hunting for rabbits. The Negroes dug their own crawfish, which they always ate with rice. And the Negroes ate alligator steaks.

Sunday, the day of rest, was a frenzy of activity, the immigrants not knowing what to do first. In the morning the men had themselves shaved. Then, with olive-pit rosary beads brought from Sicily, they attended Mass at the nearest village Roman Catholic Church. "Why, is there any other religion?" Sicilians asked, when informed that America was a land of many religions. They argued: "But there is only one God, only one Marial!"

In the candlelit churches, on their knees, the immigrants thanked God on His throne that they were living and working in America. The priests intoned their prayers and parables in three languages: English, French, and Italian, re-

minding the worshippers of the coming Holy Days, which devout Sicilians observed in Louisiana just as they had in Sicily: *San Giuseppe*, *San Giovanni*, *Santa Lucia*; celebrating *Natale* with the traditional fig-cakes made at Christmastime.

Sunday afternoons they spent mixing flour and kneading dough for their bread and macaroni; a small macaroni-making machine was sent for by one family from Sicily to the plantations.

When Sicilians learned that a townsman had arrived in Louisiana and was working on a nearby sugar-cane plantation, several men started out on a Sunday to find him, walking many muddy miles to squeeze his arm, to ask if they could give him a hand of help, proudly offering money, assuring the newcomer he would become accustomed to the ways of this alien land, would soon learn *Americano*, unconsciously minimizing their own difficulty trying to master the English language. Over wine, they eagerly listened to the latest news of their home town. The *Avvocato*, the lawyer, was still praying for people to get into trouble so he would have work to do; the worst the men did was quarrel when they became drunk, on wine that was bought on credit. And the doctor, who philosophically prefaced every examination with: "If you are not destined to die, I will cure you," was still being paid in faggots and vegetables, with his bin so filled with lettuce he could have made salad for the whole town.

Some plantation bosses had hearts of stone, the immigrants having no set hours, merely working from rooster-song until the sun sank behind the mountain. But one French plantation boss is still remembered as being a firm, kindly man, a father confessor, listening to the woes of the men who did not have enough money to send to Sicily, advancing the money to be worked out later, acting as medi-

ator, striving to help settle the arguments that arose among men who did not speak the same language. He lived in a large comfortable house with many Negro servants. Each morning the dark hand of one of his servants pulled the rope of a huge bell outside, awakening the immigrants at seven, so they could start work at eight.

This employer spoke French to his wife and many children and to the Frenchmen working on his plantation. In this way, the Sicilians picked up many French words. But he addressed all the other workers in English, struggling to make the bewildered foreigners understand. In the end both were completely frustrated. The children of the French boss knew English and they would enter the huts of the Sicilians and ask in English, pointing to the flour: "What do you call this, . . . *farina*? We call it *flour*, *flour* in America." And pointing to the braided bread: "What do you call this, . . . *pane*? We call it *bread*, *bread*."

From them the Sicilians learned a few words of English, and the French children learned the Sicilian dialect. They in turn taught it to their father, the boss, who occasionally used one of the words when speaking to Sicilians. Noting that they addressed each other as "*Compare*," he would urge the men on to work faster in the fields, shouting: "All right, *Compá*, hurry up! Come on, faster!"

The French, German, Spanish, and Jewish workers picked up some Sicilian words and phrases, but the Negroes never did, resorting to sign language. While there was general harmony among the immigrants, the Negroes got along especially well with the Sicilians; the pipe-smoking, tobacco-chewing Negro women often begged to take care of the Sicilian babies.

A Sicilian woman, married to a Frenchman who had been working many years on the cane fields, helped teach her country-

men the English language—"Wan, too, tree . . . three . . ." When the young men learned enough English words to carry on a conversation, some courted the French or German girls they met, and married them. They would then apply for naturalization papers and settle down to live in New Orleans.

Many years later, Sicilians recalled their difficulties with the English language in the cane fields, and in retrospect found enjoyment in repeating the popular story of the Sicilian woman who went to the commissary and asked for four eggs. She was not understood by the English-speaking clerk, and in desperation she made an egg shape using both hands and began to imitate a clucking, clucking, clucking hen, until the clerk comprehended. This hen scene was re-enacted throughout the United States, wherever there were immigrants, and it is always recounted when Sicilian Americans gather and language-stories are retold.

The commissary sold everything on credit: brooms, soap, mosquito netting, wide hats of straw, dishes, cutlery, drinking glasses, lamps, kerosene, tobacco, coffee, matches, salt, canned goods, and salt pork, which was the Negroes' staple food. Sugar was 1 cent *lu panto* (those working in the sugar-house were given weekly cans of sugar and cans of syrup free). Caps, hats, and men's ready-made suits the commissary carried, too. The immigrants had to buy whatever suits were in stock, usually getting the wrong size, so the too-large or too-small trousers, vest, and jacket needed extensive alterations to make them fit.

These were made by a Sicilian woman. For almost all Sicilian girls began to wear a bright thimble, learned how to thread a needle and make the knot at the age of seven, for Sicily was a land of labor and not of waste time—many Sicilian women attaining the title of Professor of Needle.

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Material was bought in the village; on this plantation clothes were stitched on a sewing machine bought in New Orleans. The seamstress also sewed flowered-cotton dresses and hats to match for the happy, giggling Negro girls about to be married.

The commissary was a pawnshop, too, for not all could stretch their pay from one month to the next. A man's gold watch and chain was most often pawned.

Sicilian men worked five, seven, ten years in the sugar-cane fields. The season started in September-October, lasting through December. The pay generally was \$1.00-\$1.25 a day, Monday to Saturday noon. There was a day *s'genga* and a night *s'genga*. Immigrants prayed for clear weather, because they could not work when it rained.

During harvesting season, the French boss was relentless in his drive to have the work completed, begging the men to work Saturday afternoons, going about inquiring: "How about a second watch? Only six hours more." Six hours more would mean 60 cents more or 75 cents more, or another dollar. Only the half-dead refused, returning to their huts to rest their four bones. All others, young and old, the tired ones, the weak, the half-ill, agreed to work Saturday afternoons, fortifying themselves with but one cup of coffee before resuming their labor. Some continued at night by kerosene flares inside the sugar-mill, grinding, cooking, boiling, refining—many immigrants working eighteen hours a day.

Those who remained in Louisiana all year round helped to plant and cultivate the next crop of cane that took almost two years to mature. The planting of the cuttings and tending the crop was not so strenuous as the harvesting. Here the older children could work (particularly when they planted the legumes necessary to the rotation system), and consequently

the men were paid the paltry sum of 75 cents a day—many immigrants laboring for alms at only 60 cents a day, working in the heat of hell.

Summer did not seem to pass in that glowing land, where hot gold poured down thickly from the Louisiana sun—land of singing birds and crawling alligators—in that living, breathing, growing country, with stinging bugs, sucking ticks, flies that ate the eyes, and—useless to build outside fires—mosquitoes that devoured the skin. Snakes, too, wherever you set your foot—a coiled brown rope, even at the doorstep of your hut; wherever you put your hand a thick black vine climbing up and around a gold-green canestalk.

But when harvesting of sugar-cane was completed, most Sicilian men came up to Kansas City, Chicago, and Brooklyn seeking work. The tapestry threads of gold, scarlet, and purple unraveled once more and now slowly wove themselves into the homespun, enriching the homespun, that is America.

Sicilians came up by train from Louisiana to Kansas City seeking work as bricklayers or laying track, working out of Missouri: Kansas City was the gateway to the West. When there was no work to be had in the heart of America, Sicilians continued on to Chicago, seeking *paesani* in the *barri*, who could tell them when and where a railroad section-gang was being organized.

In the winter of 1892-93 Sicilians learned there was to be an Exposition in the city of Chicago, and many went directly from Louisiana to Jackson Park where they found work. The labor shortage was so acute Sicilians were merely asked: "What can you do?" and immediately set to work. Many were employed paving the wide streets, or chipping the stone curbs, for the fabulous wage of 40 cents per hour, while foremen earned 60 cents per hour. This lasted a

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few months, and when their work was terminated some immigrants stayed in Chicago, while many went on to Rockford, where they were trained to work in the factories. To this day Rockford boasts a large Sicilian American colony.

Contrasted to that lush spell is the year 1898—the year of the short Spanish-American War, when Sicilians who came up from New Orleans to Brooklyn found absolutely no work. They contacted countrymen in all eastern parts of the United States and were informed there was no work anywhere. In the autumn of that year, Sicilians made preparations to return to Louisiana to harvest sugar-cane; but yellow fever was raging, and they were informed by letter that the Health Department prohibited their return because of the epidemic.

Idle Sicilians in Brooklyn bought two loaves of bread for 5 cents, making it last for several days. The men made it a point to go daily for a 5-cent glass of beer, and while in the *barra* they ate all the free lunch they could. If they were nowhere near a *paesano's* house nearing nightfall, they slept on the floor of any dark hallway in order to save the few cents required for carfare.

It was in Brooklyn in those years that an immigrant received a letter from a mother in Sicily who thought that Brooklyn, Kansas City, and New Orleans were neighboring cities. She wrote: "My boy works in the cane fields. Have you seen my son?" She imagined that the cities of America were like the towns in Sicily, so close that they held hands.

When Sicilian men were permitted to return to Louisiana, they hurriedly went back, forgetting the hardships of the previous seasons, remembering only the wages. They were welcomed by *paesani* who lived there with their wives all year round, who were eager to relate the details of the most recent Carnival. Excursion trips

were 25 or 35 or 45 cents per passenger from the plantations to New Orleans: "the boat whistles; the King and Queen on the mule-drawn wagon; the parade on Canal Street; the confetti; the masks—no two alike. Eight days of Paradise."

The unmarried men and the husbands who came to America without their wives passed the life of the Saints in the New World. There is not enough time, there is not enough strength, not enough paper and ink in this world to write of the hardships Sicilian immigrants endured when they first came to Louisiana.

Four, five, six men shared a hut. They rose with the first loud sound of the bell—bong! bong! bong! For breakfast they brewed black coffee, and with it they ate a piece of bread. Then they walked out to the cane fields, the men wearing a shirt outside their trousers, and a broad-brimmed straw hat. In the Louisiana sun they bent to the most back-breaking, the most strenuous, field work in the world—



harvesting sugar-cane, all done by hand. In a minute-second, their clothes would be saturated with sweat.

First with the serrated edge of the hooked machete, provided by the plantation boss, they reached up and cut off the green tops one half inch below the point where the purple of the stalk ended. Then with swift strokes they stripped the long, narrow, sharp-edged leaves, working

down the stem, bending down to the root of the cane where, with powerful strokes, they severed the clump of stalks. Now they piled the cane and later loaded it into the long wooden wagons which came by, drawn by four mules, to carry it to the sugar-mill.

They worked in long rows, reaching up, cutting off the tops, bending down, cutting, and then stacking; reaching up, cutting off the tops, bending down, cutting, and then stacking the jointed cane stalks, the workers dripping blood from their veins, giving their bones to Christ. They stopped only when they heard the noon bell-bongs to wipe their brows and their wet whiskered faces with their shirttails. For their midday meal, many ate only a piece of bread soaked with juice extracted by twisting a piece of sugar-cane. With this they had a drink of water. "*Acqua e pane, vita di cane.*" Sicilians passed a dog's life with only water and bread; the immigrants starved themselves to save as much money as possible to send to their starving families in Sicily.

After an hour's rest, they went out again to the cane fields in the hot sun, cutting and heaping the purplish cane stalks. During the heat of working the men called out: "Water boy! Water boy!" A Negro youth, leading a mule-drawn wagon carrying a barrel filled with river water, came with a tin cup at the end of a long round wooden handle. All drank the never-cold water from the same dipper. Many disliked and complained about this custom, as some gulped through their chewing tobacco and the water always had a disagreeable tobacco taste.

They worked until six o'clock, returning to their huts wet and weary, returning without even spirit to wash their faces. Ahead were all the evening chores: trudging to the commissary for matches and salt, lighting the lamp, drawing water from the well, making a crackling fire,

heating the water, and eating their mouthful of food; tending the vegetable plot; washing in a bucket their sweat-soaked shirt, the mud-splashed trousers, the socks, the towel, and hanging them up to dry on the indoor clothesline, a gigantic garland made bright by the red or blue cotton handkerchief-for-the-nose, hanging them alongside the other pair of underwear. (It was said of Sicilian immigrants that all they brought with them to America was their courage, their confidence in God, and two pair of *mutanni*—one pair tied in a shawl, and the pair they wore.) They cleaned their muddied shoes, sharpened their machetes, washed their smoked lamp chimneys. Then the men patched, and replaced buttons. At last they dropped, limp as bunches of kale, into their unmade beds.

At night came nostalgia, the pain of separation. To be tied, to be linked to one another, was not sufficient for Sicilians. They wanted to be woven, entwined, braided into one another, to be inextricably braided together, so as never to be separated. Pain of separation brought pain of heart, and of heart pain a Sicilian died.

How go their proverbs and sayings?: "My house, my house, little as you are, you seem to me an abbey." "A woman, a wife is necessary to a man." "A child is the staff of a Sicilian." "The man without family is dead." Here in America the men were dead without home, wife, and family. Then it was true: "Whether of firewood, or whether of walnut, everyone bears his own cross." Ai, life is a vale of tears and a world of woes. That which comes we have to take. "And who is happy in this world? . . . a Count, a partridge, and a guitar."

On Sunday evenings, an occasional happy guitar sang: "Come, Ninella mine, come alone," "Marianna, let's go to the country," "Oh Marie, Oh Marie," and

"Sleep, Cammela." Cards-to-play were brought out, although it was considered gambling and a mortal sin in the Old Country, where the saying went: "When the rich play cards, they wager their fields; when the poor play, they wager their fava beans." Here, while smoking their pipes or long, thin cigars, they played games of the Old World, like *setti mezzu*, with money of the New World, penesi, Indian head pennies.

But their chief diversion was recounting the old stories from back home.

In lamplight they remembered white-haired Father Arcangelo with his pom-poned biretta, who sat half-asleep with age in his straight chair, half-listening to the confessions the men made, kneeling before him in the Sacristy. They recalled the ancient anecdotes of the deformed Bertoldo, with his quick witty replies, amusing the King who asked: "Which is the best wine there is?" Bertoldo answering: "The wine that is drunk in the house of others."

They spoke of the beera they were learning to like, that could be bought at 10 cents a large pitcher; of American viscu, which they occasionally drank. But while whiskey was "the life of man" to an American seaman, wine was the life of man to a Sicilian. A Sicilian child grew amid fallings and picking-ups; a Sicilian woman could live on songs and flowers; but a Sicilian man had to have wine—without it he could not live. They compared the relative merits of the inferior wine at 25 cents a gallon bought in the barri of New Orleans with the red and white wines of Sicily. In Sicily wine was the tears, the laugh-tears of grapes, the pure juice of grapes, with no color added. In America, who sees them make it? Do you know what they put into it?

They fumed at the indifference of the government, the heads in Rome who didn't know and didn't want to know any-

thing about those who did not have anything to put in the mouth, or of starving, sorrowing, separated peoples. Eh, the time of the brigands was past when, masked, they robbed the rich to give to the poor. And what could one do? "That which comes we have to take." *Chista e la vita di lu poveru!* They said: "And what would we have done if it had not been for Christopher Columbus? Where would we have gone if there were no America? What would have become of us if America had not been discovered? Blessed America! Blessed Christopher Columbus! Glory, glory and Paradise to Christopher Columbus!"

Then the blowing out of the lamplight. The bats flying in the Louisiana night. Darkness, and the dreams of men far away from home.

The men were paid monthly—\$30, \$35, \$40. ("We should thank God one thousand times an hour we are in America!") Most men worked both day and night, and their earnings for the season ran as high as \$300. The paymaster paid them off in silver dollars. The immigrants immediately tried to exchange the coins for paper money, which would be lighter to carry around. With their wages some paid board, paid the commissary for commodities bought there on credit. But their first thought was to send the money order (sometimes the green-backed bills were placed in the envelope and this would be "insured"—registered) to their wives and families in Sicily, keeping just a little for themselves to save and repay the steamship fare loan.

With the money order went a letter. They told little because few peasants could read and write. You could start counting the literate, those who could write two words, but you would not arrive at three. One weight-master dipped his pen point into ripe strawberry juice to

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save the few cents for the ink. A *paesana* who made out the money orders wrote letters for them at a charge of 25 cents per letter, so correspondence was confined to: "I am working, and I pass it well in America." They told few details of their lives here, filling the paper with inquiries as to the health of their families with *tanti baci e abbracci* to Maria, Rosaria,



Caterina, and Lucia. Twenty-five cents for writing a letter, and still another *picayune*—another 5 cents—was needed for the postage stamp with the portrait of President Grant.

When the Post arrived, the women of Sicily stood in their open doors waiting for the letter, eager for news of loved ones far away, for the cash or the money order so they and their children could eat and drink and live. One letter was mysterious with new words from the New World: *bosso, giobba, au righti, fasti, fusta-classa, jachetta, sportu, show-offi*.

The townspeople were bewildered by the strange words and after the letter writer—who generally was paid 2 cents and a gift of fruit-in-season—attempted to translate it, she removed her apron and,

tying on her fringed shawl, departed for the doctor's house. For the doctor had studied English, as well as medicine in Florence, and he "translated" the letters for his patients as a labor of love. *Ai*, the people reflected, in America the townsmen were forgetting the Sicilian dialect; in America they were doing the *sporti*; in America they were using *Americano* in the letters and putting Sicilian aside.

Immigrants always planned to return to their homeland with their fortune made in America, but invariably the money went for the *tichetti* to bring their entire families to the New World. What money they saved they hid in their undershirts, or they had a special pocket sewn in the inside of their trousers, so the money was always on their person. No doors in the dark huts were locked; there was rarely a robbery among the immigrants. In fact, there was a constant borrowing, lending, returning of money among the men.

But perhaps in a measure this honesty was enforced by the threat of shotguns that hung on the walls of the huts; by the revolvers bought across a counter and carried in hip pockets for all to see and be warned. Frequently on pay nights quarrels over debts arose, and in true frontier fashion these guns, as well as flashing knives, were often used. For hadn't they all come to America for the same reason? Weren't they all here for the same purpose? Didn't they all pray to the same Saint for the same blessing to work and make money to send to their famished families in Sicily?

With the hard work and the inordinate hardships in Louisiana came complete exhaustion. The heat gave the men cramps, heat stroke, made the men melt like wax, and they became thin as broomsticks, lean as cats. Sicilians who came to America weighing 180 to 190 pounds fell away to 110 and 100 pounds, barely able to stand on their feet. They lost their

appetites, their strength, and their spirit, falling in the fields as trees cut down.

When thin, emaciated Sicilians were taken to an old pharmacist in New Orleans, who was considered a doctor, he generally prescribed eating oysters, assuring them it would bring back their appetites. The men faithfully followed this course of treatment, spending their time among the fishing boats at the docks, noon and night. And usually a week of this diet coupled with the enforced rest from work instilled new life into the exhausted men. But as soon as they could lift their feet they hurriedly returned to their only source of income, the sugarcane fields, risking illness again, but preferring illness to the anxiety, the dread, and desperation, the terror of being out of work.

At the outset, all the immigrants sang; they were so happy to be working, to be occupied. Their prayers were answered; all they had asked of life was work, for a man could not live without working. With work, time passed; and the paymaster came with the silver dollars—bright coins that meant bread for the families of Sicily. With wages, dignity was restored, and a man could live and feel like a Christian.

Men and women sang. Voices from the Old World blended with voices of the New—a choir in the cane fields. The Negroes sang their spirituals, always calling on "Lawd, Oh Lawd." From the throat spurted songs in praise of distant lands: "*O! Addio, Mia Bella Napoli!*"—*bella Napoli* being the most beautiful spot on earth. From the heart outpoured the threnodies, filled with lament and love and longing. At such times the immigrants were brothers, speaking one language, the universal language of song.

But soon the singing ceased, for the unbearable heat and the "bad air" weakened them considerably, and the

health and bones of Sicilians were left on the cane fields. The heart-pain of separation from their families, the homesickness at the familiar sight and scent of the camphor trees on the plantations, the tragic news of the infant deaths in Sicily made them curse their miserable fate: "I damn the hour and minute I was born." Then, sinking to the depths, with despair-filled voices they cried out to Heaven: "Ai, why was I born?"

For now the excessive rainfalls, the rising river, the muddy waters of the black bayous, the still, flower-filled swamps, the stagnant marshes where mosquitoes bred, brought the yellow-fever epidemics that struck in the years 1897 and 1898. Useless to hang the mosquito netting, canopying the beds, because, while few natives caught the disease, all the immigrants seemed to contract the fever. Sometimes the ambulance—a wagon drawn by a pair of horses—came to take the yellow-fever victim to a charity hospital in New Orleans. Recoveries could be counted.

The symptoms were unmistakable. First came the chill, the fever, jaundice, the leg pains, then the black vomit. The "City" sent a doctor to visit the patient in his plantation hut; he sprayed both inside and around the hut. He brought with him a quarantine sign, soaked the white bed sheet he hung over the door "not to let the infected mosquito out, and not to let the bad air get in."

Then came the delirium, the convulsions, the coma. Death took parents and left little children; took all the children and left prostrated parents and grandparents; took all the men in a family; or wiped out whole families. The plantation boss arranged, and often paid for, the burial of a penniless swarthy Sicilian with his big black mustache and still heart—paid for the burial in a New Orleans tomb-above-ground.

THE PECAN TREE

"Woes by the shovelful, but death, never!" a Sicilian prayed. Ai, but death was capricious; he took many delights, many pleasures, when he gathered the good, when he gathered the young. And there was no understanding why, except that all was Destiny. For now came the anguished letters to the women of Sicily, telling of the yellow-fever deaths.

How Giuseppe, so young (if you smelled his mouth you could still detect the odor of milk), who was reduced to skin and bones in America, walking about with death on top of him, had closed his eyes for once and always. With a dead heart, his betrothed made a little bundle departing for the Convent to take her vows at Giuliana, becoming a bride of the Church, consecrating her life to the service of God.

How Giovanni, a man so good even the earth he stepped on loved him, whose skin went dissolving in America, looking like death dressed, like death standing up, had made the voyage we all must make. His youthful wife never ventured outside, not even in the evening to the fountain for water, saying she never again wanted to see the face of a man. Keeping her door bolted, living with a weight on her heart, she was left alone like a damned soul, alone like a soul of purgatory, with only the cobwebs for company.

The black-bordered envelope came to Gna Bedda, announcing before she read it the news that her husband Minicu, a man with more honor in his shoe than some in their whole race, grown so thin in America he had strength little or nothing, would not be seen any more in this world. Gna Bedda, who didn't know what a chair was, with a field-and-a-half of children, from that day began to call Maria for Rosaria, and Rosaria for Caterina, and Caterina for Lucia, and Lucia for Maria. Talking to herself alone, alone, like an insane one, not hearing when

called, mistaking the sugar for the salt.

Ai, when the head of the house goes, the house goes after him. The goods follow the master. Gna Bedda losing the bit of land against which they had borrowed the two hundred lire for the *tichettu* to go to America—losing the land, losing the surveyor fee, the notary fee, the interest paid-in-advance, losing all, all. When the head of the house falls, all falls.

The women of Sicily were weeping tears of blood, crying like Maria, La Dolorata, filling their black aprons, wearing black for the rest of their lives, looking like the crows; calling: "Immaculate Virgin, hear me and console me! Jesus of my soul, read my heart, and console me! Maria Santissima, you help me!"—supplications that even made the walls weep.

My father was packing his valise. He was returning to his native soil, and it was the custom of the men to bring back a souvenir, a memento of the New World. The choice of most was American coins. Many took along pieces of sugar-cane. One Sicilian carried back a pair of shoes-for-rain—rubber shoes—the first they had ever seen in his delighted town ("O, in America, when it rains they put one shoe on top of another shoe!"). My father filled his blue handkerchief with pecans from the pecan tree that was color-of-gold in autumn.

He was returning after a five-year stay in America, working in Louisiana, Missouri, and out of Illinois. He was going back a broken man, childless and wifeless. "Don't go! Don't go! We may never see each other again," his young wife had prophesied when he left for America. But all was Destiny; all was the will of God. Their proverbs told them so. Sicilians lived by their proverbs and popular sayings, opening their eyes to the morning light with: "*Tuttu e la volontà di Dio.*"

Their proverbs were a shoulder. Plodding through their narrow cobbled streets, they leaned on: "God closes a window, and opens a door." In night-dark they shut their eyes with the assurance: "God gives the wound and God gives the medicine." They believed in their proverbs, found peace and resignation in their proverbs. My father faithfully and resolutely resigned himself with that most beautiful of all Sicilian proverbs: *Even leaves do not rustle on trees without the will of God.*

Now he was returning to Sicily with a definite purpose in mind—to remarry. (A woman, a wife is necessary to a man. A child is the staff of a Sicilian. The man without family is dead.)

Arriving at Palermo, my father exchanged his American gold pieces for lire and then proceeded to his province, "rich in flocks, by the banks of Akragas where the sheep wander." My future father proposed marriage to a beautiful cousin with enormous dark eyes, who was to be our mother.

Then there were the hurried preparations, the banns for the three consecutive April Sundays, the pearl-flowers to be sewn on the pale-rose silk, the relatives to visit and invite, the *caprettu* to roast with garlic and bay leaves, the bread to bake, the cask of wine to order, the candied almonds. There would be no music at the wedding of a widower.

Only one matter was left to be taken care of, in that long-ago Sicilian spring. My father was marrying a cousin, and, since this was against the laws of the Catholic Church, the priest informed him that he would have to make an offering for a special dispensation to marry her. The priest demanded the unheard of sum of seventy-five lire. "But why seventy-five lire" my father asked, "when the customary charge is twenty or ten or five lire, that is, if one has the five lire?" The

priest retorted: "We need the money to fill out the papers and send to Rome; we need the money to carry on the work of the Church. Moreover, didn't you return to Sicily with your fortune made in America?"

My father was impatient to return to Missouri with his wife and aged mother. He had only enough money to buy the three *tichetti*, after he had loaned two hundred lire to a cousin to get to New York and having, unhappily, had to refuse two others.

He had passed his early life in Sicily murmuring Pater Nosters for his woes, praying for the Street of Providence to open to him, but he had found the Street in America. He would return to an America he had seen with his own eyes. This time he would not look for gold in the streets. Life was not all lilies and roses in America, yet you could work and save a twenty-five cent piece. In America one could eat bread to pass time; in Sicily one ate the slice to survive. In America it was possible to pay a debt; in Sicily, never!

My father would leave part of his heart in the ancient land of his fathers for the wideness, the newness, of the Middle West, where there was so much work to be done. He would literally begin a new life in the New World, settling in Kansas City close to his devoted sister and brother. Despite the hardships and heartache he had endured, he still retained a Sicilian's scarlet faith that there was work, bread, and peace of mind in blessed America.

This is one of a series of pieces about Sicilian Americans Mrs. R. R. Aaronson has been writing for COMMON GROUND. Others appeared in our Autumn 1946 and Summer 1948 issues.

The illustrations are by Bernadine Custer.

THEME FOR ENGLISH B

LANGSTON HUGHES

The instructor said,
Go home and write
a page tonight.
And let that page come out of you.
Then, it will be true.

I wonder if it's that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.
I went to school there, then Durham, then here
to this college on the hill above Harlem.
I am the only colored student in my class.
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,
through a park; then I cross St. Nicholas,
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what
I feel and see and hear. Harlem, I hear you:
hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.
(I hear New York, too.) Me—who?

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,
or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach.
I guess being colored doesn't make me not like
the same things other folks like who are other races.
So will my page be colored that I write?
Being me, it will not be white.
But it will be
a part of you, instructor.
You are white—
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
That's American.

COMMON GROUND

Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
But we are, that's true!
As I learn from you,
I guess you learn from me—
although you're older—and white—
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.



Langston Hughes' latest volume of poetry is *One Way Ticket*, published by Knopf last January. A definitive anthology, *The Poetry of the Negro*, which he edited in collaboration with Arna Bontemps, was published the same month by Doubleday. His opera, *Troubled Island*, the music by William Grant Still, was on last spring's schedule of the New York City Center Opera Company.

The drawing is by Jacob Lawrence, who did the decorations for Mr. Hughes' *One Way Ticket*.

THE PURSUIT OF LIBERTY

(Continued from page 2)

as the melting pot," "the most important magazine in America, since national and racial minorities are the crux of the world situation today."

COMMON GROUND reaches only a small part of the people who would be interested if the Council had the funds to make it more widely known. Its influence, however, cannot be measured by circulation figures. To community leaders, schools, and teachers, it is bringing material, suggestions, and tools for carrying on the fight for acceptance and human equality. Its articles and stories are widely reprinted. It has stimulated other magazines and book publishers to bring out material on intergroup relations. Out of its pages have already developed some two dozen books by writers it has discovered and encouraged. What it has achieved in the intangibles is more difficult to measure—in stimulating a new awareness of the richness of America with its heterogeneous people from all

over the earth; an appreciation of its immense cultural resources; an understanding of the shortcomings of American democracy, which in practice—though never in ideal—excludes too many Americans from full participation in community life; a dedication to making that American ideal prevail.

But if the work is to go on, COMMON GROUND needs help. There are many ways readers and friends can give a hand: Contributions to the Council—they are tax-exempt—for the support of the magazine. Gift subscriptions. Advertisements. Making COMMON GROUND more widely known. Is it in your public library? Your schools? Your friends' homes? Your will? Let us know ways in which the magazine has been useful to you or your community, ways in which it could be more useful.

COMMON GROUND begins its tenth year in some financial uncertainty. With your help it will continue in service of the American idea.

• The Pursuit of Liberty •

CONDUCTED BY MILTON R. KONVITZ

IN APRIL THE NEW YORK COURT OF APPEALS handed down an interesting decision involving the question of exclusion of Negroes from grand juries. In the case of *People v. Dessaure* (85 N.E., 2d, 900), it appeared that a grand jury, sitting in Nassau County, indicted a Negro for assault, and a subsequent trial jury found him guilty. Before and after the trial the defendant moved for an order to vacate the indictment on the ground that the grand jury was unconstitutionally formed, in that there was a systematic and intentional exclusion of Negroes.

In accordance with the New York statute, the list of grand juries in Nassau

County has long contained 600 names. From 15 to 60 vacancies which have occurred annually through death, removal from the county, and disability for age or physical condition have been filled by the county commissioner of jurors and the county board of judges out of 60 to 100 names taken by the commissioner from the county trial jury list. The case for the defendant rested upon two circumstances: (1) the commissioner of jurors submitted to prospective jurors a questionnaire which required them to indicate their color, sex, weight, height, and color of eyes and hair; (2) for a period of about 10 years no Negro had been selected for

service as a grand juror in Nassau County, though numbers of Negroes who were qualified for such service resided in that county during the period.

The commissioner justified the first of the two circumstances by claiming that every juror's name is submitted to the identification bureau of the police department in Nassau County to be checked against FBI files. As to the second circumstance, the county judge found that the petit jury list of 18,000 names is chosen without discrimination, that Negroes and whites are placed upon it without any reference to color, and that Negroes serve upon trial juries in Nassau County. The county judge concluded that no case of discrimination in the formation of the grand jury was established. The Court of Appeals affirmed the judgment.

The Court of Appeals pointed out that according to the 1940 census there was one Negro to every 33 persons in Nassau County. The grand jury percentage of the trial jury list is so small that it permits the choice of only three men from the trial jury list out of every 100 for grand jury service, or only one out of 400 to make up the 45 that stand to be appointed each year to complete the total of 600. If the ratio of grand jury to trial jury were based on the ratio of Negroes to whites in Nassau County, the naming of one Negro would have afforded proportionate representation to the Negroes among the 45 added to the grand jury list in the year 1946, when the defendant was indicted. The Court of Appeals pointed out that the statutes require no fixed representation or ratio of other groups on the grand jury list.

Two judges dissented. Judge Desmond in his dissent pointed out that there was no question of a conspiracy deliberately to exclude Negroes; but he added that this was not the question in the case.

Even if the exclusion were not consciously planned, there was discrimination in the selection of jurors on racial grounds. He said: "That there were in Nassau County numerous Negroes qualified for grand jury service is here admitted. That the system followed in Nassau County for decades kept all such Negroes off grand juries, including the grand jury which indicted appellant, is plain from this record. This indictment was therefore void and the judgment should be reversed and the indictment dismissed."

Judge Fuld also dissented. He went further than Judge Desmond and said that there was purposeful exclusion of Negroes from the Nassau County grand jury. He stated: "Traditional in our jury system is the concept that the jury, petit or grand, be a democratic and representative body drawn impartially from a cross section of the community to assure that it reflects the interest and viewpoints of all races, classes and groups. . . . The facts and figures before us tell the story. Nassau County contains within its boundaries an appreciable Negro population, with a fairly heavy concentration in several of its towns. It is conceded that many Negroes were qualified (and that is demonstrated beyond peradventure, I suggest, by the circumstance that two Negroes were selected and placed on the grand jury list but a short time after the court below denied defendant's motion to set aside his indictment). In spite of all this, the sorry fact emerged at the hearing that no Negro had ever been called for service on that county's grand jury within the memory of witnesses or officials, a period of almost twenty years. That proof, particularly in the light of further evidence that each prospective juror was required to answer a question as to his 'Color' in the qualifying questionnaire, made out a substantial prima facie case which the

People, in my opinion, failed to meet. . . . Any attempt to explain the Negro's complete and long-continued absence from the grand jury as a product of chance or accident, or as the result of heedlessness or inattentiveness, strikes me as not only unreasonable but as incredible. And, in any event, the thrust of the equal protection clause deprives such an explanation of either validity or force by imposing an active duty upon jury selection officials. We have been told in unmistakable terms that 'What the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits is racial discrimination in the selection of grand juries,' and that it matters not whether the discrimination is 'accomplished ingeniously or ingenuously'—actively by outright elimination on the ground of color, or passively by failure to take affirmative action to insure that the jury be democratically and representatively chosen."

It appears from this case that there is racial discrimination in the administration of justice in northern states as well as in the southern states. There are differences of degree. Many more cases like the one under discussion will need to be brought in order effectively to teach northern public officials the elements of the Bill of Rights.

THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION is sponsoring four bills introduced in the Senate by Senator McGrath. S. 1726 deals with lynching, S. 1727 is intended to outlaw the poll tax, and S. 1728 is a federal fair employment practices act. The contents of these bills are fairly well known. The fourth, S. 1725, introduces some innovations in civil rights legislation and is perhaps the most important of the civil rights bills now pending in Congress.

S. 1725, if enacted, would be known as the Civil Rights Act of 1949. It has a

number of purposes: (1) the establishment of a commission on civil rights in the executive branch of the federal government; (2) the reorganization of the civil rights activities of the Department of Justice; (3) the creation of a joint congressional committee on civil rights; (4) to amend and supplement existing civil rights statutes; (5) to protect the right to political participation; and (6) to prohibit discrimination or segregation in interstate transportation.

Section 2 of the bill is perhaps the first statement in a legislative measure that Congress wishes to strengthen and secure the civil rights of the people of the United States under the Constitution, "and that it is the national policy to protect the right of the individual to be free from discrimination based upon race, color, religion, or national origin."

The bill contemplates the creation of a commission on civil rights to be composed of five members appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The commissioners are to be paid on a *per diem* basis. The commission is to be charged with the duty to gather timely and authoritative information concerning legal and social developments affecting the civil rights of individuals under the Constitution and laws of the United States; to appraise the policies, practices, and enforcement program of the federal government with respect to civil rights; and to appraise the activities of the federal, state, and local governments, and the activities of private individuals and groups, with a view to determining what activities adversely affect civil rights. The commission is required to make an annual report to the President on its findings and recommendations. The commission is to have a full-time staff director and such other personnel as it may deem necessary and advisable.

The bill also provides that there be an additional assistant attorney general in the Department of Justice in charge of a civil rights division, concerned with matters pertaining to the preservation and enforcement of civil rights. The personnel of the FBI is to be increased to the extent necessary to carry out effectively the duties of the FBI with respect to the investigation of civil rights cases under applicable federal law, and FBI agents are to receive appropriate training and instructions in the investigation of civil rights cases.

The joint committee on civil rights is to consist of seven members of the Senate and seven members of the House of Representatives. This committee is to make a continuing study of matters relating to civil rights, and to study means of improving respect for and enforcement of civil rights. It is to hold hearings and may require the attendance of witnesses and the production of papers.

Senator Humphrey has also introduced a bill, S. 1734, which calls for the establishment of a commission on civil rights. Senator Humphrey's bill provides that the commission on civil rights shall consist of three members appointed by the President, who shall devote full time to the work of the commission and shall receive an annual salary. The commission is to have the following powers: to conduct studies, investigation, and research in the field of civil rights; to investigate the present operation of all government agencies to determine what changes are necessary to prevent denial of civil rights in such agencies; to assist states and municipalities and private agencies in conducting studies to prevent denial of civil rights; to conduct hearings whenever a written complaint supported by proper evidence alleges that civil rights are being denied or abridged; and to recommend to Congress legislation necessary to safe-

guard civil rights. The commission is to have power to compel the attendance and testimony of witnesses in the production of evidence.

The two bills calling for the establishment of a civil rights commission are intended to implement one of the important recommendations contained in the report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights. The establishment of such a commission becomes a pressing need at this time when the United States is setting machinery in motion to bring public charges under the peace treaties against Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, for violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

ON MAY 23, 1949 the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia decided the Lapides case, in which the Court considered the interesting question as to whether or not an act of Congress may make a distinction between a native American citizen and a naturalized American citizen.

Lapides was naturalized in 1928. He went to Palestine in 1934 and remained there until 1947, when, on July 3, he arrived in the United States. He presented his certificate of citizenship to the immigration authorities in the City of New York. They excluded him on the grounds that he had expatriated himself and was an alien without a quota immigration visa. The authorities acted on the basis of an act of Congress which provides that a person who has become a citizen by naturalization shall lose his citizenship by residing continuously for five years in any other, foreign state. Lapides contended that this act is unconstitutional, and that, therefore, his American citizenship remained unaffected by his residence abroad for 13 years. He argued that the law arbitrarily discriminates against naturalized citizens and that no distinction

can be drawn validly between naturalized and native-born citizens.

Judges Clark and Proctor upheld the constitutionality of the act and declared that Lapidès had been effectively expatriated. They held that the law was not unreasonable or arbitrary.

The case is of special interest because of the dissenting opinion of Judge Edgerton. He said that Congress may not discriminate against naturalized citizens and that arbitrary discrimination is not due process of law. He contended that Congress had the power, under the Constitution, to establish a uniform rule of naturalization, under which the number of citizens may be increased, but that Congress has no power under the Constitution to divide citizens into classes. He said: "By authorizing Congress to prescribe who may be naturalized and how, the Constitution does not authorize it to deprive citizens either at or after naturalization of liberties that other citizens enjoy." A naturalized citizen, he said, stands on an equal footing with a native citizen in all respects except that he is not eligible to the presidency.

Judge Edgerton contended also that the statute imposes a heavy penalty on the exercise by naturalized citizens of the liberty to live abroad. He said: "All native citizens, regardless of possible devotion to a foreign country and connections there, are exempt. Congress may expatriate citizens on reasonable grounds. No doubt these may include five years' residence abroad. But it does not follow that Congress may expatriate some citizens and not others on this ground. . . . The fact that the appellant was born in Austria is no reason for penalizing his sojourn in Palestine. Together with the immigration law the Nationality Act makes it in effect a crime punishable by banishment, which may well be called cruel and unusual, for some citizens but not for

others to live five years abroad. Even complete inability, from whatever cause, to return to the United States during the five-year period gives no immunity, and a considerable number of foreign-born Americans have therefore been banished by circumstances over which they had no control."

It is interesting to note that in the brief filed on behalf of Lapidès by the American Jewish Congress it was contended that the statute under which Lapidès was expatriated was adopted because of an anti-Zionist attitude. The brief quoted from hearings before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization in 1940, at which the assistant legal adviser to the State Department stated that the statute would be desirable in order to meet the situation created by Zionists, who are, he said, principally Russian and German Jews who have been naturalized in the United States and have later gone to Palestine. The American Jewish Congress brief comments on this point as follows: "That statement is probably one of the most revealing ever made in a legislative hearing. No suggestion was made in the testimony that naturalized American citizens sympathetic to the Zionist aspiration of creating a Jewish state in Palestine were insincere or untruthful in renouncing their original allegiance or in taking the oath which bound them to this country. No suggestion is made that they have been guilty, at any time, of defection from American loyalties. Nor is it suggested that their desire to visit or to reside for a time in Palestine is based on motives which are not equally shared by many native-born citizens of Jewish ancestry or faith.

"What therefore was implied in the statement of the State Department's spokesmen was the view that the persons in question, namely, naturalized Ameri-

can citizens sympathetic to the Zionist ideal, should in some manner be discouraged from developing, by visit or temporary residence, association with Palestine or from expressing, by such action, their support of the Zionist program. To probe the relationship of that view to the anti-Zionist attitudes then entertained by certain American officials would take us too far afield. But it is clear that the motivating factor in the enactment of Section 404(c) was a highly questionable political view, whose implications and basic assumptions stand in sharp contrast to the official support of the Zionist ideal by the American Government since 1922, of every American President from Woodrow Wilson to Harry S. Truman and of distinguished Americans of all faiths and creeds, among them the late Louis D. Brandeis."

Judge Edgerton's dissenting opinion ought to go far to persuade the Supreme Court that American law ought not to tolerate any distinctions between the native-born and naturalized American citizen.

IN BALTIMORE there is a privately owned non-profit school which receives an annual subsidy from the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland. In return for these subsidies each member of the Baltimore City Council and of the State Senate appoints one student yearly free of tuition. The students appointed under the subsidies constitute five per cent of the 2,000 enrollment, and the subsidy amounts to twenty-three per cent of the school's total budget. The school occupies a building owned by the City of Baltimore and pays a nominal rent.

The school follows the policy of excluding Negroes. A Negro applicant sued for an injunction, invoking the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The federal district court

held that since the management of the school is not subject to public control, the school is private, and its refusal to admit Negroes is not state action inhibited by the Fourteenth Amendment. The case was dismissed. *Norris v. Baltimore*, 78 F. Supp. 451 (1948).

A comment on the case in the Harvard Law Review points out, quite correctly: "This decision illustrates that meticulous adherence to the phraseology of a constitutional provision may effectively thwart the policy which the provision is intended to further. Had the city and state discriminated directly by providing art education for white students but not for Negroes, there would have been a clear violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Here, since the subsidy is disproportionate to the number of publicly appointed students and the excess is used to reduce tuition, the net effect of the art school's admission policy is to give white, but not Negro, students an opportunity to obtain assistance. Nevertheless, the court held that this discrimination is insulated from the constitutional prohibition because the public funds are channeled through a private organization. This result is contrary to a number of recent cases which have applied the Fourteenth Amendment to private organizations as a means of effectuating the limitations on the states. At the same time this case demonstrates the compelling reasons for departing from the narrow requirement that the action proscribed be that of the state itself. . . . While it would be contrary to the literal language of the Fourteenth Amendment to apply it to private organizations as such, there is no objection to applying it to private organizations as an indirect means of keeping the state within the constitutional requirement that equal facilities be provided. In the present case the state clearly discriminated by choosing to assist art

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students only through a school which has for many years excluded Negro students. If, as here, direct proceedings against the state are impracticable or impossible, the Amendment may be unenforceable unless the courts will enjoin private conduits of the state's discrimination."

IN CONNECTION WITH the anti-lynching bills pending in Congress, among them S. 1726, introduced on behalf of the Truman administration, an argument is frequently made in the press and elsewhere that such legislation is unfair to the South because murders occur frequently in northern states and such murders are not contemplated to be affected by anti-lynching legislation. The argument is: why should a murder in Brooklyn be a matter exclusively for the New York State authorities, while a lynching in Georgia should call for federal intervention?

An effective answer to this question has been provided by an editorial in the *Christian Science Monitor* (June 14, 1949). The editorial points out that the recent lynching in Irwinton, Georgia, is not the same sort of thing as a murder in New York City. While there may be more violent crimes per day among the 7,000,000 people in New York City than in little Irwinton in a decade, murder is not lynching. "Lynching—true lynching, the kind that has come to an issue in the

pressure for federal laws—conforms to a pretty definite pattern:

"1. It is almost always concerted violence by members of the majority race (whites) against a minority race (Negroes). In this one particular it resembles another kind of mass violence chargeable largely to northern and border cities—the race riot.

"2. It is usually directed against a person or persons suspected of crime, and takes the guise of meting out justice. It thus negates all the guarantees vouchsafed an accused by the Bill of Rights.

"3. It is almost always accompanied either by overpowering of local police and jail officers or by connivance on their part.

"4. It is not characteristically an act solely of a community's 'criminal element.' Members of the 'better element,' carried away by the passions of the moment, are sometimes involved, making local detection, prosecution, and conviction next to impossible.

"The implications which stem from this pattern are of a very different order from those inherent in a knifing along the Memphis levee, or even the shooting of Victor Reuther in Detroit. Maybe federal legislation isn't the answer—certainly not if the states can and will find one. But it throws less than light on what to do about lynching to say simply that violence is violence."

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CONDUCTED BY CAREY MCWILLIAMS

DR. HENRY G. STETLER has prepared an excellent report for the Inter-Racial Commission of Connecticut: "College Admission Practices" (copies can be obtained from the Connecticut Inter-Racial

Commission, 500 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut). The report is based upon some 2,100 questionnaires filled out by the graduates of the 1946 and 1947 classes of nine Connecticut high schools.

Although the tax-supported institutions of the state have a good record of fair treatment, the private non-denominational colleges show a distinct pattern of discrimination. Making allowances for differences in scholastic attainments and extracurricular activities, it nevertheless appears that Protestant graduates are clearly preferred over Catholics, Jews, and Negroes. Jewish and Negro applicants, moreover, must make many more applications for admission than Protestant students.

To make this pattern more pronounced, it should be noted that 55 per cent of the students in the private non-denominational colleges come from private non-denominational preparatory schools. Only 10 out of 31 of these schools stated directly that they would admit Negroes and only 9 per cent of the students enrolled in the 31 schools were of Jewish background. Obviously, therefore, a studied attempt has been made to wall off the private non-denominational preparatory schools and colleges for Protestant students. The graduates of these colleges, moreover, have a clear preference for the premium positions. The policy, as the report notes, is really not one of exclusion; most of the private non-denominational colleges have a few Catholics, Jews, and Negroes. The presence of a few Catholics, Jews, and Negroes makes it possible for these institutions to profess an adherence to American educational ideals. No, the real policy is one of restriction, involving a deliberate attempt to minimize the number of Catholics, Jews, and Negroes. Exclusion would be too pointed, too crude.

The report makes a point that is often ignored in studies of this kind, namely, that Jewish students are particularly handicapped since, as a rule, there are no Jewish denominational schools. On the other hand, with Catholics the de-

nominal school tends to make available facilities that offset the discrimination practiced against them. Of the private non-denominational preparatory schools, the report notes that a more liberal policy is followed in the admission of foreign students than in the admission of qualified Negro students. The foreign student, of course, is an "exotic"; the Negro a potential competitor.

The report also shows that educational institutions have five means of getting at the applicant's racial or religious background: the letter of request for application forms (here a name will often provide a clue to identification); the preliminary application form; the application form; the letters of recommendation; and personal interviews. Even where no overt discrimination is practiced, therefore, educational institutions have many opportunities to acquire information which can be made the basis of restrictive policies. All in all, this is a most excellent and valuable report. It should be particularly useful in test cases since it is issued by a state commission rather than a Jewish defense organization.

UNDER THE ELONGATED and opaque title of "Queries Concerning Industry and Society Growing Out of the Study of Ethnic Relations in Industry," Dr. Everett C. Hughes of the University of Chicago has written a most searching and persuasive article on racial and ethnic discrimination (*American Sociological Review*, April 1949). What Dr. Hughes does in this article is to point up the relation between the rise of modern industrial capitalism and patterns of discrimination. Industry, as he points out, is everywhere "a grand mixer of peoples." In no considerable industrial region of the world has an indigenous population supplied the whole working force; wherever industry has arisen, a portion of the working force

has been imported and usually from a sufficient distance to be noticeably different from "the local people." Here there are two poles or extremes: 1. cases in which industrial centers have been built up around a nucleus of native people, who have provided the controlling and technical and trained personnel, with successive waves of immigrants entering the working force at a later date and at the bottom of the skilled hierarchy; and 2. those cases in which the controlling and technical skilled nucleus has gone out to establish industry in remote non-industrialized areas. The growth of industry in Western Europe and the United States provides an illustration of the first pattern; the rise of industry in colonial areas, of the second.

Not only is industry a great mixer of people but it has been, in Dr. Hughes' phrase, "a colossal agent of racial, ethnic, and religious segregation." Segregation, Dr. Hughes insists, has reference to some degree of functional separation of different kinds of people within a common system. Industry not only brings unlike people together but it sorts them out for various kinds of work; and the sorting process, in the first instance, is almost necessarily in terms of race, culture, or religion. "For cultures," writes Dr. Hughes, "differ in nothing more than in the skills, work habits, and goals which they instill into the individual" and, when races first meet, they are always unlike in culture. These differences may disappear in time, but the segregation to which they lead will tend to keep alive a sense of difference over a long period and the sense of difference will be greatly re-enforced by the competition for status within the common industrial system.

Industry, according to Dr. Hughes, is "almost universally an agent of racial and ethnic discrimination." This, again, is necessarily true because industry must

choose from among people who are not all alike ethnically, in selecting its working force. Again, industry often seeks labor from new sources and, in doing so, it must discriminate in favor of some groups and against others. Over a period of time, too, there comes to be accumulated among the foremen and the industrial workers "a body of opinion and lore" concerning the work habits of the latest recruits, which itself becomes a baneful factor in group relations. It is highly paradoxical, notes Dr. Hughes, that modern capitalistic industry which boasts of a ruthless ideology of indifference to persons and makes a cult of efficiency should also be such a stubborn and ignorant breeder of stupid and inefficient racial doctrines and practices. But there is, of course, a reason behind this seeming paradox. In drawing inexperienced people into the less skilled jobs, industry constantly profits by hidden social subsidies based on the willingness of these new recruits to work at low wages. To maintain these subsidies, industry must constantly seek still newer and "greener" recruits. The process tends to be repetitive; in fact, as Dr. Hughes notes, it is doubtful if industry can maintain the level of profit which it has come to expect apart from the maintenance of these hidden social subsidies. Hence the stereotyped beliefs which industry fosters are really "efficient" in the sense that they serve to maintain certain groups in subordinate positions within the industrial hierarchy.

Dr. Hughes makes an excellent point, also, in calling attention to the fact that industrial areas built up around native peoples always make a fetish of "free immigration" and similar policies since industry, in these areas, wants to be able to tap new sources of labor. But in colonial areas, where industry has gone to the people rather than the people having gone to industry, the industrial managers in-

sist upon such institutions as the labor compound, the plantation, and the company town as a means of reducing the mobility of labor and holding it to the job. In the mother-countries of modern industry (Western Europe and the USA), the native middle class, although not always associated with industry, often comes to share its point of view by profiting from land speculation and the many subsidiary economic opportunities which the growth of industry stimulates. They will often share, therefore, in the "body of opinion and lore" which has accumulated in industry about various groups and peoples.

In colonial areas, prior to the coming of industry, the native peoples have usually worked only as members of communities; hence they are not willing to work for long periods in the new enterprises, and penal and other sanctions are used to hold them to their jobs. In the colonial areas, also, there is almost no admission of the native population to the inner and higher positions of prestige and control within industry; whereas in the mother-countries of industry there is usually some mobility, though it is usually much less than the system boasts of in order to create incentives for labor. Industry encourages ambition, notes Dr. Hughes, yet, curiously enough, it praises some people for not being ambitious and complains of others for being too ambitious. A key question, therefore, in the mother-countries of industry is: How much ambition can the industrial organization tolerate? Once the organization has reached a point of saturation, the system itself becomes endangered since it has become difficult or impossible to accommodate the ambitions of the most energetic elements of the subordinate groups. Industry does not select people impersonally, despite its devotion to such concepts as "efficiency" and "objectivity."

On the contrary, those who select the new recruits do so in a manner calculated to preserve their relative place and power within the structure of the industrial organization. Thus, as Dr. Hughes concludes, "racial and ethnic differences will be found to act as a sort of litmus paper" to bring out characteristics and processes which might otherwise be overlooked.

This is, indeed, a memorable paper: a basic primer in the how and the way of the dynamics of discrimination in the modern world. I particularly commend this piece to those who, like Dr. Oscar Handlin, profess to find little connection between the rise of modern capitalistic industry and patterns of group discrimination (see: Commentary, July 1948, pp. 79-85).

WITH COURT ACTIONS BEING FILED in some communities to force school authorities to remove *The Merchant of Venice* from school libraries, and with picket lines being thrown around theaters showing the movie version of *Oliver Twist*, an old question has once again arisen: How are those people, Jews and Gentiles, who abhor anti-Semitism, to deal with the myth of the Jew which, like a compulsive image, lies buried in the collective unconscious of the English-speaking peoples? A thoughtful discussion of this problem has been provided by Leslie A. Fiedler in a piece entitled "What Can We Do About Fagin?" (Commentary, May 1949). In the first place, an attempt to excise a particular work, as say *The Merchant of Venice*, is essentially an infantile reaction; it is like the child who beats the inanimate object a shadow of which, projected on a wall, has frightened and disturbed him. *The Merchant of Venice* did not create the myth of the Jew; it reflects that myth. In the English-speaking world alone, the myth is very old. It is the myth of the Jew as Usurer,

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of the Jew with the Knife, and, as Mr. Fiedler points out, it has overtones of meaning, as in the famous "pound of flesh," that suggest a threat to sexuality; a fear of castration. It is, indeed, a most ancient myth and one that tends to be revived by those who, like T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and other writers whose impulse is neo-Christian, would turn back to the traditional sources of the myth.

But what response can those who abhor anti-Semitism make to a culture in which so terrible and perilous a myth is inextricably involved? Whatever the response, any attempt to expurgate the images of the myth will not get at the root of the problem; for the fear out of which the myth arose will still remain. It is most naive, as Mr. Fiedler says, to believe that this myth can be coped with merely by the excision of a few pages from a handful of books. For the myth of the Jew with the Knife, "circumcisor, castrator, ritual murderer," is two thousand years old; it was not invented by Chaucer or Shakespeare. "The myth may eventually die," writes Mr. Fiedler, "but it cannot be killed." What should be done, he suggests, is to translate the myth; to define its hidden meaning. The impulse with which we seek out some image upon which to rivet our fears is a real impulse. But what Gentiles must learn for themselves is that Shylock is the creature of their fantasy and fear; that it is *their* stratagem which seeks to transfer this sense of evil to an alien, to the Other One. In this sense, Shylock can be interpreted in a fashion that will undermine and not emphasize anti-Semitism. The problem, therefore, is not one of suppression but of proper interpretation. "Indeed," writes Fiedler, "in this apocalyptic period of atomization and uprooting, of a catholic terror and a universal alienation, the image of the Jew tends to become the image of everyone; and we are perhaps

approaching the day when the Jew will come to seem the central symbol, the essential myth of the whole Western World."

Although I agree with Mr. Fiedler, I wonder, nevertheless, whether he has not missed a phase of the meaning of this recurrent controversy. Although I would not take part in a campaign to force *The Merchant of Venice* from the libraries nor would I picket a performance of the play, I do believe that protests of this sort have a positive value. For it is precisely protests of this kind which force people now to take a second look at Fagin. The protest underscores the distortion, the myth. Out of the controversy, in fact, comes such an excellent and illuminating article as that written by Mr. Fiedler. In other words, one can sympathize with a protest movement, and even recognize that it has some value, without agreeing with or sharing the stated objectives of the movement. Actually those who protest about *The Merchant of Venice* or *Oliver Twist* are giving expression to a feeling of outrage over the persistence of the myth; it is this which motivates them rather than a desire to see the play or movie banned or expurgated. The protest is a healthy, honest action. It is not the protest with which one disagrees but the remedy which the protestants would apply.

MAXINE W. GORDON HAS GIVEN a brilliant and shrewd analysis of a most curious aspect of racial prejudice in an article on "Race Patterns and Prejudice in Puerto Rico" (*American Sociological Review*, April 1949). Miss Gordon starts with the statement that the myth that racial prejudice does not exist in Puerto Rico is related to the extreme reluctance of Puerto Ricans to discuss any aspect of race with Americans from the mainland. The prejudice against colored persons in

the United States, according to Miss Gordon, has stimulated a many-sided, subtle, and most complex pattern of prejudice in Puerto Rico. In the first place, race prejudice in the United States engenders internal conflicts between colored New Yorkers and colored Puerto Ricans in New York (who emphasize their Spanish language and Latin background to distinguish themselves from the American Negroes). This conflict in turn affects the white Puerto Rican in Puerto Rico. The latter—aware of the conflict in New York—insists that he is not a Negro and, to redeem himself in the eyes of mainland residents, discreetly withdraws a step further from the Negro islander. This withdrawal sets in motion a most complicated series of “maneuvers for status” which is full of ironies and contradictions.

Race prejudice in Puerto Rico is all the more real and complex for being unacknowledged and denied. In fact a new type of behavior pattern emerges which has been given the name of “crypto-melanic,” namely, “the fear of, and effort to hide, the color problem within one’s self.” For example, the white Puerto Rican recognizes and perhaps sympathizes with the struggle of the colored Puerto Rican against prejudice. At the same time, however, he fears the implications of this struggle since it threatens to impinge on his status. And—a third factor—he also feels hostile to the white Americans, whose recognition he seeks, since they are responsible for his most uncomfortable feelings about the colored Puerto Ricans. Hence he attempts to suppress the color problem, and the attempt to suppress it becomes, in a sense, the essence of the problem.

The tendency to suppress the problem shows up in the census. The 1940 Puerto Rican census lists the population as being 76.5 per cent white and 23.5 per cent col-

ored; presumably, therefore, there are no mixed breeds. Yet many independent studies have shown that the mulatto element is six times greater than the Negro. Miss Gordon shows, also, that the Puerto Ricans are morbidly conscious of racial mixtures. They use terms like *pardo*, *moreno*, and *trigueño*, to indicate different shades of brown in skin color. They also have other terms to signify varying shades of color: *grifo*, a person of white skin with kinky hair of any color; *jabao*, a person of white skin with blond kinky hair; and *prieto*, “just plain black.” The country people use a term, *aguacero*, meaning hard rainfall, to designate those who are very black; *lloviznas* (mild rainfall) for those who are medium black; and *opaco* (cloudy) to designate the “*triguenos bastante oscuro*,” i.e., persons with kinky hair but not completely dark skin. All this nicety of differentiation indicates that color is an extremely important factor despite the unwillingness of the Puerto Ricans to discuss it.

Now, how does one account for the unwillingness of the Puerto Ricans to discuss the color problem? how explain the tendency to hide the problem within one’s self? In the first place, as Miss Gordon points out, economic conditions in Puerto Rico have fostered racial crossings. With most Puerto Ricans subsisting on notoriously low incomes, it has been estimated that from 15 to 20 per cent of the marriages are not formalized. This is the “poor man’s” or consensual marriage, and it naturally encourages interracial unions. On the other hand, not all crossings are condoned. A wealthy white Puerto Rican can marry a mulatto woman without apparent loss of status, although the wife never achieves equal recognition; but a white woman marrying a mulatto or Negro man suffers a marked loss of status. In other words, the poor can intermarry with nearly complete freedom since it is

actually desirable that the poor white Puerto Ricans be reduced to the level of the poor colored Puerto Rican; but inter-marriage at a higher level is never fully sanctioned, since to sanction it would be to increase the number of claimants for an extremely limited number of prestige jobs and positions. In this sense, of course, being the wife of a wealthy white Puerto Rican is a "job" in much the same sense as to enter the professions or trade. The culture of Puerto Rico makes it possible for either colored or mulatto Puerto Ricans "to move up" the social ladder by personal achievement, but the upward movement must always be *relative*, that is, the colored or mulatto Puerto Rican must never come to occupy a final social position that equals the "white" of similar achievement. Hence the mulatto wife of the wealthy white Puerto Rican is tolerated but never fully accepted. Her full acceptance would mean that the subordination of mulatto and colored Puerto Ricans had been abandoned.

In such a curious situation, the "crypto-melanic" behavior patterns will probably result, in the long run, in the elimination of the Negro element, if only as a matter of semantics. For example, a special census taken in 1935 indicated that 85 per cent of the colored population claimed to be of "mixed" parentage. With every one trying to get away from the color problem by marrying some one of lighter skin color, and by the simple device of simply denying one's Negro blood, it would seem to be only a question of time until the Puerto Ricans have all become "Latin" and "Spanish," at least in name.

THE ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science for March 1949 is devoted to a reappraisal of our immigration policy—with articles on the historic aspect of immigration, the demographic factors involved in Ameri-

can immigration policy, the assimilation of the foreign-born, and current immigration problems in the United States. A strong case is made for a thorough-going reconsideration of our immigration policy. The immigration problem as a whole has not been thoroughly reviewed since 1911, and the 1917 act is the most recent comprehensive immigration enactment. Since 1911, demographic studies have shaken many of the dogmas and myths upon which our immigration policy has been largely based in the past. We know, for example, that the great overseas European migration—a feature of the expansion of the hegemony of European civilization—was based upon a relatively short-ranged demographic or vital revolution, primarily caused by a rapidly widening gap between births and deaths. The tendency of Europe to export population would have been reversed without the enactment of restrictive policies in the United States. In fact, the peak of European emigration had been passed before the middle of the last century.

Nowadays, also, most European countries are profoundly concerned with maintaining population levels and have developed population policies aimed at checking a declining birth rate. Apart from demographic factors, political considerations alone have brought the free flow of emigrants from Europe to an end. We, too, are now faced with a currently slow growth of population to be followed by a period when the population will be stationary, after which it will begin to decline. When the latter development sets in, one can readily predict that our restrictionists and chauvinists, like their Nazi counterparts, will scream for marriage loans, bachelor taxes, childrens' allowances, and other provisions based on a fear of population decline. One of the most interesting articles in this number of the Annals is that by Irene B. Taeuber

on "Postwar Emigration from Germany and Italy." Miss Taeuber shows, clearly enough, that the Nazi and Fascist talk about *lebensraum* could never be reconciled with the policies that Germany and Italy pursued. If they were so "crowded" as nations and needed room in which to expand, why were both nations so unreservedly opposed to free international migration? Actually both nations were interested in the enhancement of power; not in the relief of "population pressures." One must also feel grateful to Miss Taeuber for demonstrating that emigration is not an answer to the "problem" of Germany or Italy. Italy, to be sure, does have a need for temporary emigration; but emigration from Germany, by siphoning off selected groups of the young, the better educated, and the more skilled, would simply aggravate the German problem.

There is, indeed, a wealth of information in this volume. However, I found one article, that by Dr. Clyde V. Kiser, on "Cultural Pluralism," which contains some conclusions that need to be re-examined. Using the persistence of a "mother tongue" as a measure of assimilation, Dr. Kiser works out a chart or graph which shows that Danish immigrants have been the most readily inclined, Mexican immigrants the least inclined, to abandon a mother tongue. Relating these findings to studies of marriages within the same national origin group, Dr. Kiser tentatively concludes that Polish, Italian, Russian, and presumably, Mexican, immigrants have a "slower" rate of assimilation than other groups. But this is extremely dubious. For one thing, when Dr. Kiser refers to "Russians" in this connection, he is obviously referring to Russian-Jews. Their inclination to marry within the same national origin group is no measure whatever of their capacity for assimilation. Few groups, in fact, have

shown a greater aptitude for "assimilation." It will also be noted that the groups referred to are those which, by and large, are adherents of the Catholic (Italian, Mexican, Polish) faith or the Jewish faith (Russian-born Jews). Therefore if any comparisons are to be made on the basis of the tests selected by Dr. Kiser, it would be more appropriate to refer to the variable rates of assimilation as being related to *religious* rather than ethnic groups.

To discuss the comparative assimilation of Mexicans, as Dr. Kiser does, without recognizing that this particular immigration has certain peculiar historical and geographical aspects is quite misleading. After all, we fought a war with Mexico and, for a century, an undeclared guerilla warfare between Anglos and Hispanos has prevailed along the border. This historical circumstance, of course, has a most profound relevance to the Mexican immigrant's fondness for his mother tongue. Similarly the fact that Mexican immigrants are more strikingly concentrated in area today than at any time in the past, and that this area of concentration is made up of the old Spanish borderland settlements which are geographically one with Mexico, also has a bearing on the same issue. Furthermore the nature of, and the spacing of, settlements in the arid Southwest, and the prevailing low densities of population, are factors which also have a bearing on the issue, for these factors have greatly reduced or minimized opportunities for acculturation. Finally the types of employment available in this sharply differentiated region have had a bearing on the Mexican's opportunity for acculturation. Merely to note a few factors of this kind is to realize the pitfalls which yawn before those who would attempt, on the basis of meager and only partially relevant data, to draw up invidious "scales" or measurements of assimilation.

• The Bookshelf •

DEMOCRACY UNDER FIRE

REVIEWS BY HENRY C. TRACY

David Spitz probes *Patterns of Anti-Democratic Thought* (Macmillan, \$4.50)—ideas and theories of government that were made explicit by Plato and can be traced back far earlier than that as implicit: the notion of control by a minority because “the People are not fit to govern,” a basic argument used alike by their self-appointed rulers and by an impressive list of philosophers for centuries. The old claim still persists; the idea spreads—in some quarters; and the number of persons commonly respected as political thinkers who now revamp the old theories will surprise any reader of this book. True or false, the new reasoning is not only plausible but persuasive, as analyses and quotes found here amply prove. Therein lies the threat to democratic thinking. Blatant talk like that of Houston Stuart Chamberlain—“Our whole civilization and culture of today is the work of one definite race of men, the Teutonic . . . the work of warriors and statesmen”—can be seen through easily. The more recent and subtle writing of James Burnham and other American theorists cannot, for it contains assumptions none but the keenest mind is likely to detect. Such assumptions, either dubious or plainly false, are exposed here in every case—a unique and striking feature of this author’s approach. He shows that anti-democratic theories cannot be refuted by appeal to sentiment or unrealistic idealism. They must be met by rigorous exposure of flaws, and by stressing the truth that no form of rule other than democracy provides *within the framework of its system* the means of correction by peaceful means of those abuses which power in the hands of a minority always breeds.

If one read no further than the Preface of *Changing Patterns in American Civilization* (University of Pennsylvania Press, \$2.50), he would carry away something worth his while as a plain citizen. For in the Preface by Robert Spiller, chairman of the Editorial Committee for this selection from the Benjamin Franklin Lectures at the University, he would find a challenging statement: “The American people do not yet understand their own civilization as an accomplished fact.” And the reason for it: “The American way is no longer the revolutionary way. . . . To defend an established order requires a rationale different from that which creates revolution.” The intricacy of economic and social problems into which we are plunged, says Dixon Wecter in an essay on *The Contemporary Scene*, accounts for our confusion in great measure. But the breakdown of idealisms that served us up to the turn of the century and a widespread revolt against the philosophies that supported them, as reported here by Yale’s Brand Blanshard in *The Heritage of Idealism*, comes near the heart of the matter. In the liveliest of lectures, Dr. Blanshard gently and respectfully deflates the materialistic psychologies that under such names as pragmatism, instrumentalism, and behaviorism have been undermining not only faith but reason. It should be consoling to the “average man” (if he so rates himself) to find how deeply the cleverest minds of our day have involved themselves in contradictions. Plain folk may still hope to retain their good sense, which, after all, is a prime factor in good government. Writing of *Science and Humanity*, Detlev W. Bronk, president of Johns Hopkins, makes a strong case

for freedom in scientific research rather than directed effort for solution of practical problems. Princeton's George F. Thomas reviews *New Forms for Old Faiths* that result from the impact of the sciences and Biblical criticism of dogmas that liberal thought does not find tenable. Harvard's F. O. Matthiessen in *The Pattern of Literature* contrasts "mass production" (the best seller) and the real artist in letters, alienated from his society.

The distinguished Norwegian historian, Halvdan Koht, has written of *The American Spirit in Europe* (University of Pennsylvania Press. \$3.75) in a way that makes it appeal to readers on this side as a history of American civilization and culture mirrored in that of an older world. New departures, ideas, innovations are reflected back to be magnified—or diminished—by the result of their impact overseas. Born and bred in a small village in Norway, reaching highest eminence both in education and the service of the State, Dr. Koht can give equally authentic report of the effect of American ideas and discoveries on the plain folk of Europe and on their governing classes or their intellectuals. From their governments the earlier response was mainly either hostile or condescending. For the people, word from the New World, telling of popular liberties and fresh opportunity, brought hope of a better, freer life. Throughout this book, stress is laid on the awakening of such promise and of movement toward it. There is frequent mention of the part played by immigrant Americans in the building of a better world.

A translation by Arthur E. Briggs of *Pioneers of American Freedom* by Rudolph Rocker (Rocker Publications Committee. Los Angeles. \$3) gives us a study of ideas and thinkers better described as "libertarian" (a word often used here) than as liberal. The author is concerned to show that these ideas

stem from the same sources as those of Paine, Jefferson, and others instrumental in shaping the democratic tradition, and that they are not foreign importations but were formulated by Americans of Yankee stock, with Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker as leading proponents. The main body of the book is devoted to the school of thought known as "philosophical anarchism" and may be taken as a defense of it and a critique alike of state socialism and of rule by majorities.

In a quite different vein, Stringfellow Barr's *The Pilgrimage of Western Man* (Harcourt, Brace. \$4) explores six centuries to find an answer to world problems and the challenge to democracy. Well qualified for a work so ambitious in scope by his years as a professor of history, as an editor of the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and as head of St. John's College, where the Great Books are studied, he writes with force and clarity. Out of the baffling confusion of conflict and intrigue that mark the Western story, he brings an intelligible succession of changing patterns. By high-lighting key figures and events, he makes history luminous. *Western Man* is, blindly and stumblingly, on a quest for an abiding city where no evil can befall him. At the start—with religion as a guide—he seeks the City of God; then, later, a City of Man, with science as the guide (first pure, then applied), endowing him with every bounty and pleasure. Either way, the path is bloody. Wars are fought alike for faith and for imperial commerce; or for mere power and aggrandizement; or for racist supremacy. Industrial revolution immensely complicates the problem, provides vaster armies, worse engines of destruction, and insures the spread of conflict to every Western nation. Meanwhile, economic nationalism has made the "Posture of War" inevitable. By 1939 all Europe is infected with a moral cancer. The search for a beatific

city, whether heavenly or material and sybaritic, has overlooked the one needful condition: the consent of humanity to act in common under a code yielding peace from aggression. The myth of state sovereignty is responsible. Each nation held that it could—or should—protect itself by war; each risked destruction in proving it. “The Bomb” has made that

position untenable. Common man knows this, but his rulers still refuse to face it. They still cling to their precious sovereignty and dodge the issue. But even in war-wasted Europe the author finds proof that men of many different languages and cultures are now aware of the peril before them and willing to merge their interest under one common federation.

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF RACE RELATIONS

REVIEWS BY ROBERT M. CULLUM

COMMON GROUND readers will find *Inter-group Relations in Teaching Materials*, the Report of the Committee on the Study of Teaching Materials in Inter-group Relations (American Council on Education. \$3) of unusual interest, dealing as it does with the tools available for quickening the American ideal in our schools. Are the schools living up to their opportunities? Are they using their classrooms to teach acceptance, brotherhood, and goodwill? In seeking an answer to these questions, the American Council on Education has prepared a volume that throws considerable light on the role of the schools and their textbooks in our present critical period. The Committee examined 315 volumes used in our schools and colleges, dealing with the fields of history, geography, citizenship, literature, sociology, and the social sciences. In a sense, the conclusions reached are both disturbing and heartening. Little in the way of deliberate bias or prejudice was found in the textbooks. It is apparent that our textbook writers do not deliberately hold any group or race to ridicule. At the same time, the report notes the important effect on attitude formation of the general if unmalicious use of loaded words such as “half-breed” or “teeming hordes” or “swarms of immigrants.” In

summary, the report states: “There are few instances of direct prejudicial instruction, but many instances of failure to introduce materials or to explain situations conducive to a deeper understanding of race relations on the part of young citizens of America.” This survey should be of value to all who speak, write, and publish for the instruction and guidance of youth.

In *Americans Betrayed*, Morton Grodzins (University of Chicago Press. \$5) subjects to searching and detailed study the root causes of “a disastrous political decision”—the evacuation from the West Coast in 1942 of all persons of Japanese ancestry. If the author adds an indispensable volume to the library of information concerning this group, it is almost by indirection, for the focus is not on what happened to the evacuees, but why and how evacuation came about. The “Americans betrayed” are not those of Japanese ancestry alone, but all Americans who have subsequently become subject to the evacuation precedent. Work on this book was started early in 1942 while the events described were very much alive and sources of information fresh. Most important were interviews with officials and others who had a direct part in fostering, or in attempting to

prevent, evacuation; quantitative analysis of both news and editorial coverage in a large number of newspapers; and letters in the files of Congressmen and government departments, the latter being made available to the author as a representative of the University of California Evacuation Study. Throughout, there is a flavor of accurate, first-hand reporting more than of "research," although the painstaking documentation of both fact and comment gives ample proof of careful method and adequate conclusion. Without rancor, *Americans Betrayed* hits hard. There is no hesitancy in listing the names and stating the specific role of participants in an evacuation decision which was "predicated on a racist philosophy, nurtured by regional pressures and eventually justified by falsehood." The author makes clear his own view that General John L. DeWitt (whose responsibility was primary since he requested and received the evacuation authority) acted sincerely as a military commander, however faulty may have been his social data. No person concerned with the relation of government to civil liberties can afford to miss *Americans Betrayed*.

One needs no crystal ball to prophesy that the encyclopedic *The Negro in the United States* by E. Franklin Frazier, professor of sociology at Howard University (Macmillan. \$8), will become a standard sociological reference source. In its development, Dr. Frazier has drawn on an impressive array of source material—enough to fill a 43-page bibliography. Discussed in detail are Negro class structure, family life, churches and businesses, schools, press, race consciousness, and Negro leaders. Emphasis is placed on the persistent "moral and social isolation" of the Negro. Dr. Frazier notes that "The Negro is a large racial minority without an ancestral cultural heritage to fall back on. While he is essentially an American,

he is still regarded as an alien without even the romantic sentiment with which the Chinese or Indian is invested. The more he participates in American life, the more he feels certain areas of intimate association closed to him." Dr. Frazier feels that the most important gains in Negro-white relations have come at a secondary level where contacts are impersonal. Jobs, labor unions, schools, and public recreation areas come under this heading, with the greatest advances toward acceptance coming in economic relations. A final chapter discusses the prospects for a more complete integration of the Negro into American society. "The American nation is committed to certain principles," says Dr. Frazier, "the most important of which are human freedom and human equality; and in its bid for the support of the colored majority in the world, the treatment of the Negro can become its greatest asset." By implication, the shifting balance of world power which must begin to take the colored world into account may provide the American Negro's best hope for an acceleration of present gains.

In a chapter of near book length (113 pages), very important new material concerning the characteristics, attitudes, and social relationships of American Negroes is provided by *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life*, by Samuel A. Stouffer, Edward A. Suchman, Leland C. DeVinney, Shirley A. Star, and Robin M. Williams, Jr. (Princeton University Press. \$7.50). This volume is the first of a series of studies in social psychology in World War II, editorially sponsored by the Social Science Research Council as an outgrowth of the Army's experiments in scientific attitude testing. Data are objectively and lucidly presented in tabular, chart, and textual form, the whole being characterized by a sound knowledge of the broad problems of race

relations and a sympathetic orientation to them. Specific questions examined include the Negro soldier population and its characteristics, definition of situations in racial terms by Negroes, view of their stake in the war by Negroes, their reactions to prospects of overseas combat duty, general adjustment of Negro soldiers in the Army at home and overseas, comparative reactions to being stationed in the North and in the South, attitudes of Negroes and whites toward racial separation in the Army, opinions as to leadership, and a note on Negro troops in combat. The treatment is authoritative, and the report will be much quoted as an original source.

Thoughtful and constructive material is provided by *Build the Future*, Addresses Celebrating the Inauguration of Charles Spurgeon Johnson, sixth president of Fisk University (Fisk University Press. \$1.50). At Dr. Johnson's request, the inauguration ceremonies were given over to analysis and planning in the fields of southern affairs and Negro life with which such an institution as Fisk must deal, rather than to personal or institutional eulogies. Participants in the discussions included such divergent figures as Calvin Hoover of Duke and Preston Valien of Fisk, members of the research staff of the National Planning Association; a vice-president of International Harvester; the presidents of Tuskegee, North Carolina College for Women, Vanderbilt University, Sarah Lawrence College, and Howard University; Marshall Field, publisher of the Chicago Sun-Times; Mary Switzer of the Federal Security Agency; William Hastie, Governor of the Virgin Islands; Louis Wirth of the University of Chicago; and Ralph Bunche, director of the Trusteeship Department of the United Nations Secretariat. The words of Dr. Johnson as he began his inaugural address are those of a calm and forceful man: "I take my

stand on these four pillars of faith: a practical realism and scientific discipline in education, social responsibility in human relations, international knowledge and understanding as the key to survival and self-discovery, and an unambiguous, well supported ethical universalism. That is to say I believe in work, justice, freedom, and moral power." Patience without weakness is a force to move mountains.

There is no semblance of patience in Ray Sprigle's *In the Land of Jim Crow* (Simon and Schuster. \$2.50). Four weeks of posing as a Negro in the Deep South caused this white writer to become a frightened and thoroughly angry man. His apprehension did not grow out of specific personal experience—throughout his short stay he was punctilious in observing southern race etiquette, and he suffered no physical indignity. Rather it was from the first-hand recitals of those who had suffered brutality that a pervading fear of accidentally breaking the pattern of correct behavior took possession of him. Mr. Sprigle makes no pretense to an impartial or complete survey of race relations, for, by his own words, he "deliberately sought out the worst that the South could show me in the way of discrimination and oppression of the Negro." This piling of horror on horror, even though the facts have been documented again and again here and elsewhere, somehow lacks moving power. Perhaps if the report were less filled with melodrama and made more complete, it might better serve to prick the conscience of the honest-minded but complacent majority.

Although Howard Thurman, author of *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press. \$1.25), has suffered lifelong social and economic discrimination, he has become neither afraid nor bitter. He points out that "Jesus belonged to an oppressed people. The principles that

Jesus applied in his position are the same ones which other minority groups must apply today. Fear, hate and deception are not the weapons for the oppressed to use in combatting discriminations. Only unwavering loyalty to the teachings of Jesus will enable all peoples to live together in peace." This is a book of provocative meaning for those concerned with the religious wellsprings of acceptance and human dignity.

In *How Secure These Rights?* (Doubleday, \$2), Ruth G. Weintraub has used the resources of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith to produce a documented report on current anti-Semitism. The findings, which deal with discrimination in public accommodations, education, and employment and describe the "breeding grounds for bigotry" do not make pleasant reading, even though in the "balance sheet for 1948" there is a report of "great gains for minority groups," especially in the South. From this and other reports, it seems apparent that recent progress in race relations has been curiously ambivalent, with Negro and other most disadvantaged minority groups moving upward in exactly the same area that Jews are losing ground—the impersonal relationships earlier noted by Dr. Frazier. Thus Miss Weintraub reports, "It is in the areas of education, employment, fraternal organizations, housing and interpersonal relationships that discrimination against Jews is most extensive, and increasingly so." Four appendices provide added material of specific interest concerning statutes barring discrimination by places of public accommodation, potentially discriminatory questions on state application blanks for admission to a wide range of professions, statutory prerequisites for admission to practice of professions, and a model fair employment practices bill.

We welcome back into print *Caste and*

Class in a Southern Town by John Dollard (Harper, \$5), which has been too long unavailable. This is an unchanged second edition of a work which has become well known since its first appearance in 1937. The author disclaims any new research, but states his findings of twelve years ago to be equally valid now.

After all this grist from the field of race relations, there comes almost a sense of incredulity when confronted with the fact that race alone is not responsible for all stratification and disadvantage in American society. In an exceptionally well-organized report, *Elmtown's Youth* (John Wiley and Sons, \$5), A. B. Hollingshead, associate professor of sociology at Yale, gives the results of a thorough and comprehensive study of the life of adolescents in a midwestern town, or more specifically of "the impact of social classes on adolescents." Five general social strata are defined, based almost altogether on adult prestige relationships founded on wealth and secondarily on family. The report finds that environment affects social behavior at all levels, particularly as to attitudes and aspirations, and, among those of lower stratifications, is responsible for severe social damage. The author notes that "class" in America is an extra-legal concept, but none the less real, and voices "the conclusion that this class system is far more vital as a social force in our society than the American creed." He finds the root of this sad commentary not in lack of goodwill on the part of those who benefit, but in the basic arrangements of American culture.

Group Work With American Youth, by Grace Longwell Coyle (Harper, \$3.50), is not only a challenging, comprehensive, and very competent guide for professional group-work leaders, but a useful and stimulating work for all community-concerned citizens as well. Concrete examples of various types of situa-

tions involving individuals as well as clubs are numerous and well directed. Group activities are conceived of not as a manner of passing time, but as a positive means for developing the social attitudes and skills so necessary to satisfactory living in this contracting world.

In *The Negro's Adventure in General Business*, Vol. II of the series, *The Negro Entrepreneur* (The Antioch Press for Vishnu V. Oak. \$3.75), Vishnu V. Oak covers such topics as a brief history of the development of Negro business, social and economic progress, business opportunities open to Negroes, new fields of ventures, organizations for business advancement, case histories of successful business ventures, etc.

The Social Areas of Los Angeles, Analysis and Typology, by Eshref Shevky and Marilyn Williams (University of California Press. \$4), contains a technical description and interpretation of the social pattern of Los Angeles, which makes use of a new method of area analysis based on the relations of status, urbanization, and segregation. The basis of the study is the population and housing data

by census tracts for the entire Los Angeles area. The findings are presented in numerous tables, diagrams, and maps. Extensive tabulations of census-tract characteristics appear in a series of appendices. The publishers note that "The volume is addressed primarily to a professional public. It is of interest to persons engaged in empirical social research and to teachers and students of sociology at the college level. The far-reaching implications of the materials presented make it important to the administrators, planners, and architects who are concerned with problems of city development."

The Negro Handbook, 1949, edited by Florence Murray (Macmillan. \$5), is the fourth edition of this valuable reference work. It is now to be published biennially by Macmillan, each edition providing the latest authoritative information available on the American Negro. It covers a wide range of topics in compact form—population, vital statistics and health, civil rights, crime, education, labor movement and employment, government and politics, armed services, veterans, sports, organizations, United Nations, etc.

CURRENT FICTION

REVIEWS BY EDDIE SHIMANO

The pugnacious title of Ethel Rosenberg's slow-paced, gentle story, *Go Fight City Hall* (Simon and Schuster. \$2.50), is Brooklyn Yiddish for "Stop knocking your head against a stone wall. You can't win." Mrs. Rosenberg has an excellent ear for dialect and a warm affection for the people of whom she writes, especially for Mr. Pasternak who loves the BMT subway but has absolutely no use for the IRT. "That's also a train?" Mr. Pasternak asks scornfully. "Does a man have

any private life, his neighbors push from both sides and hangs over you yet? And where does such a train go, tell me? . . . So I'll tell you where. To the Bronx with the hills a man needs an iron heart to walk up and down.'" You'll like him, too.

In one wing of the Ninth Ward of a city hospital is *Limbo Tower* (Rinehart. \$3), of whose tuberculous men and their nurses and doctors William Lindsay Gresham writes. His character portrayals

are excellent—Abdullah, who has spent half his lifetime in the hospital; Wash Lee, a Negro boxer; Vitiello, a small-time gambler, and Jasper Stone, an ex-con man; Moishe Goldfarb, who can't believe he is sick; and Ben Rosenbaum, who knows he is going to die; Anne Gallagher, the night nurse; Dr. Donald Crane, the young resident physician; and Dr. Wallace Gail Rathbone, the chief. But though the story is sometimes exciting, in the end it is mired in a morass of philosophical balderdash.

Howard Baer writes a turbulent, violent story of an inarticulate Negro seaman in *O, Huge Angel* (Roy. \$2.50). Fear drives the seaman, who has stumbled accidentally upon a boy who is dying of knife stabs, to madness, for he somehow imagines that his innocence of the crime will never be proved. The story moves relentlessly to its inevitable conclusion; and, like a Greek tragedy, the important thing in this novel is its dramatic progression and emotional intensity. A small incident early in the story, before the discovery of the murder, gives the key to the unreasoned fatalism of the seaman, Mark. When refused entry to an Embarcadero cafe, he pounds on the window, calling out, "You won't do it to this Nigger. Not to Mark. Don't treat Mark this way, like some Nigger."

Angels' Camp by Ray Morrison (Norton. \$3) is about a Los Angeles probation camp for delinquent boys. Mr. Morrison is a probation officer of that city, and he knows the boys with a sympathetic understanding—the boys we know as zoot-suiters or pachucos. Of one of them, Roo, the author says, "For a moment the boy's Latin pride swelled and the green uniform and gold star [of the court bailiff] became the symbol of an arrogant foreign power that had torn away a part of Mexico. He thought of justice and revenge, and after a moment this feeling

flowed into one of superiority: Roo was a person of class, above irritation from court trash. With a smirk of disdain, he continued his mincing promenade into the judge's chambers." Mr. Crozier, the camp counselor, comes out a pale, ghost-like figure in comparison to the boys in camp.

Whisper My Name by Burke Davis (Rinehart. \$2.75) is the story of a Jew who changed his name when starting a business establishment in a small Scotch-Presbyterian Carolina town. There he joins the Baptist church, becomes wealthy, founds a bank, controls real estate, marries a native daughter—but in the end is crucified by his own guilt feeling. He loses a good friend, a Negro, by asking, "How does it feel to be Negro? . . . How do you feel about white men who treat you like that? . . . You can tell me. I'm in this with you. I think I know what it must be like. Don't you ever want to kill your white half brothers?" Thus does Gordon, born Goldstein, find his own answer to whether a man, by evasion rather than a forthright struggle, can evade the evils of discrimination.

Pearl Buck's latest book, *Kinfolk* (John Day. \$3.50), seems manufactured for the hammock trade. There is romance, or rather several romances between several couples, including an interracial marriage; there is a lot of local color of the old China (pre-World War II); there is mention (and a glossing over) of the Chinese Communists; there is a biting caricature of a well-known Chinese, a drawing-room success in American intellectual circles; and there is sharp social study of the few Chinese in America who, for example, can spend a hundred dollars on a piece of costume jewelry just for the sake of doing something on a dull weekday afternoon. But nowhere is there the great warmth and feeling for and with the people that was in *The Good Earth*.

C.C.A.U.

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To further an appreciation of what each group has contributed to America, to uphold the freedom to be different, and to encourage the growth of an American culture which will be truly representative of all the elements that make up the American people.

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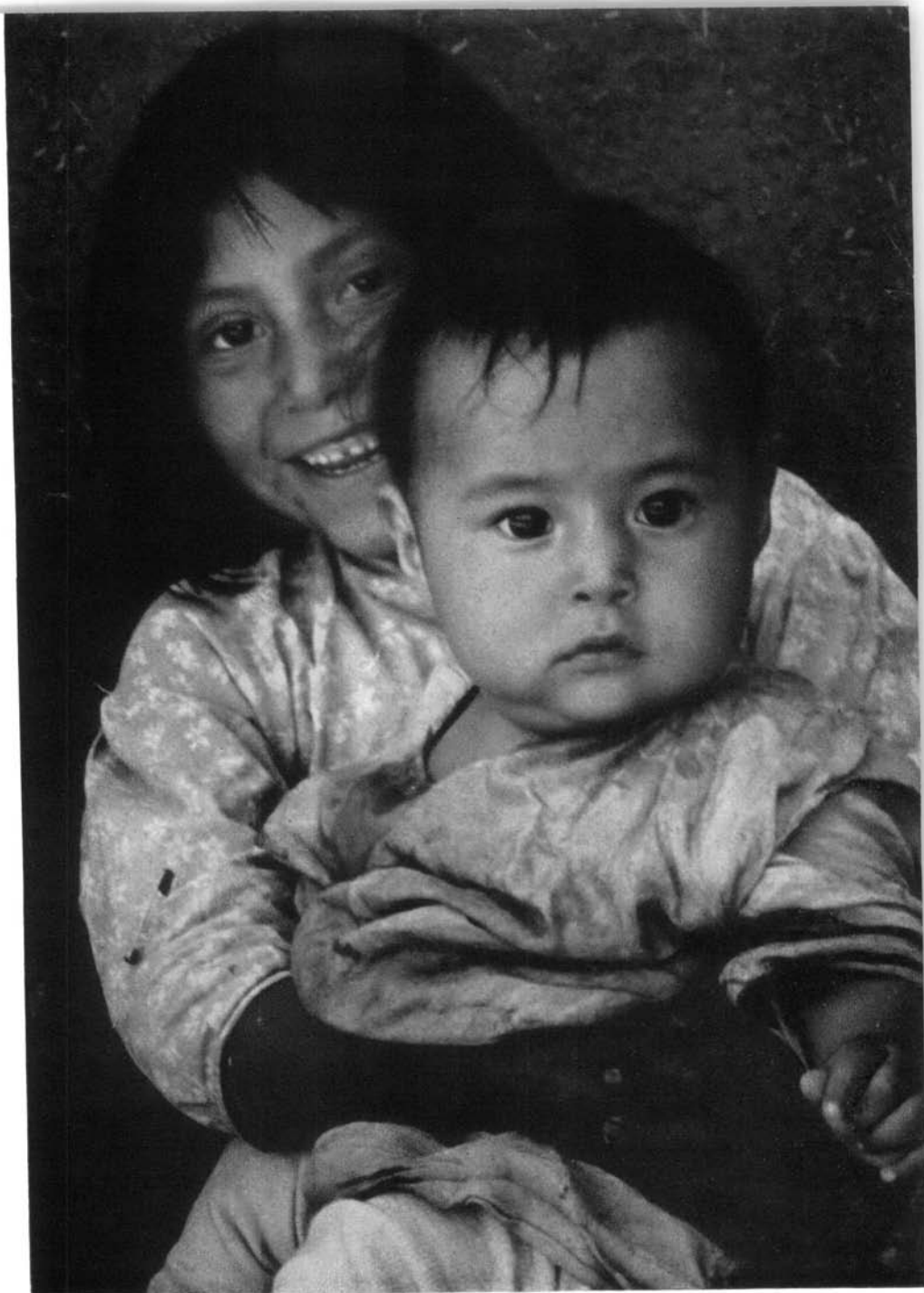
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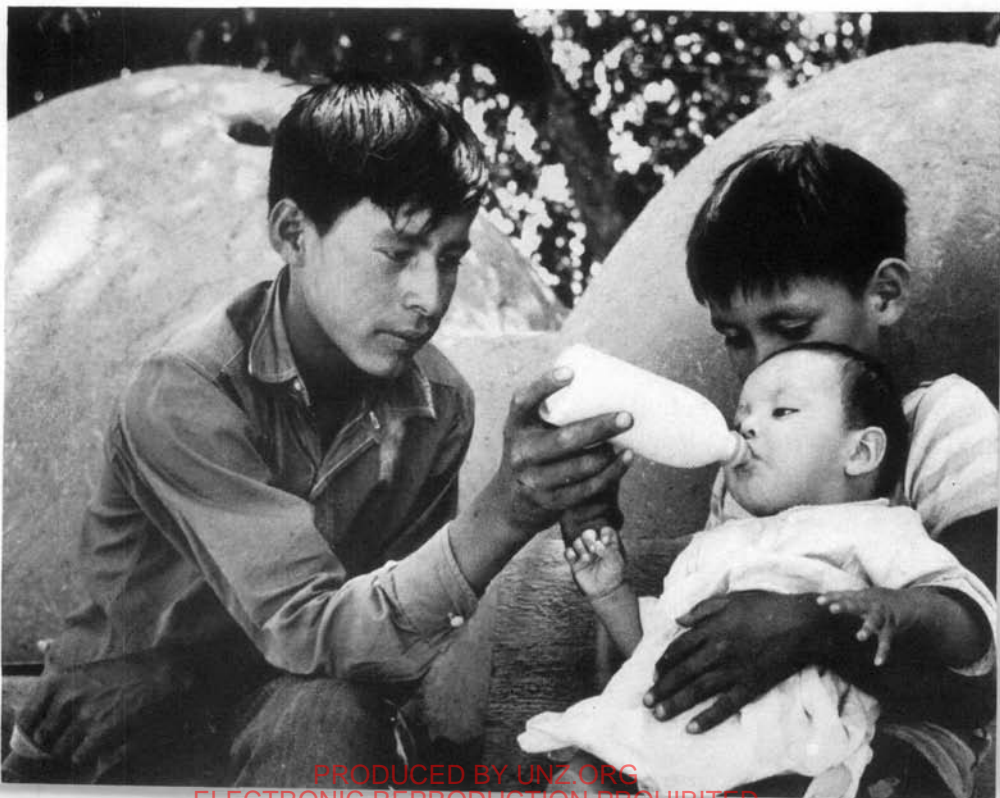
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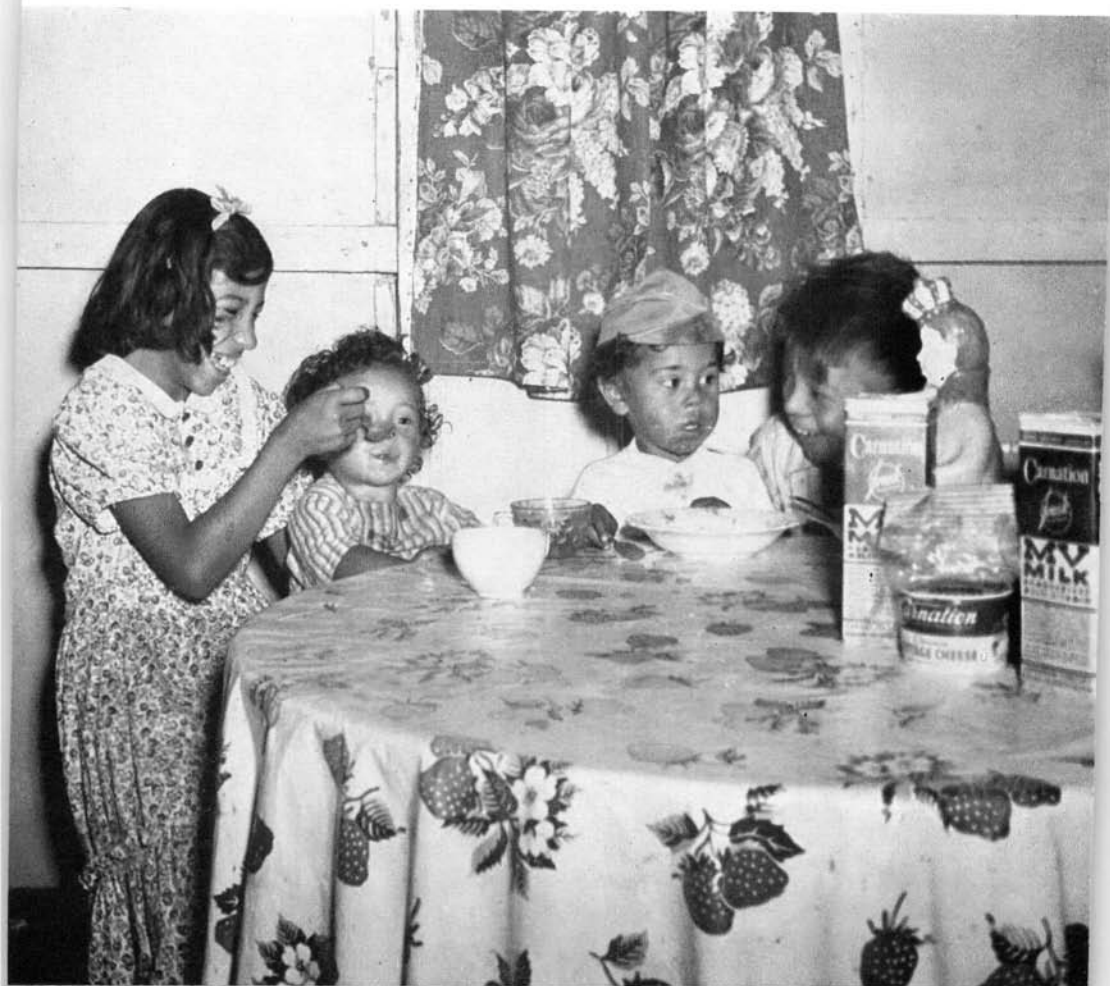
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lighter moments, as these
Mexican Americans show*